

# Case study: antisocial personality disorder



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In this paper personality and personality disorder will be defined. The way the personality disorders are broken down will be stated in general terms.

After briefly stating the general breakdown of personality disorders this paper will look in-depth at the antisocial personality. The symptoms, causes, and treatments will be discussed. This paper will examine how antisocial personality is diagnosed, who gets it, and how it affects the lives of those that live with it.

### Personality and Personality Disorder

Personality is the variances in feeling, thinking, and behavior that are unique to each person (APA, 2011). Personality disorder is a mental illness where a person has trouble recognizing and connecting with situations and people, evens themselves (MayoClinic. com, 2011).

There are many types of personality disorders. These disorders are broken down into three clusters. Cluster A is the personality that can be described as odd/eccentric. Dramatic/erratic describe the behaviors of those in cluster B. The last cluster, cluster C is personalities that are anxious/fearful (MayoClinic. com, 2011).

This paper will focus on antisocial personality disorder. Also known as sociopathic disorder or psychopathy, the antisocial personality is a dramatic/erratic personality from cluster B. Antisocial personality disorder is a severe mental illness where a person not only has trouble with recognizing and connecting with situations and people, but their behavior and ways of thinking are abnormal and destructive (MayoClinic. com, 2010).

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According to Blais, et al (2008) the causes of antisocial personality are unknown (ncbi. nlm. nih. gov). New research has identified genetics, childhood trauma, verbal abuse, high reactivity, and peer influence as possible causes of why a person may develop a personality disorder (APA. org). Genetics play a part in determining whether a person develops a personality disorder based on the traits passed along by parents. Verbal abuse, some childhood trauma, and peer influences fall under environmental or life situations and also are a determining factor. A combination of genetics, life situations, and an early lack of empathy may be linked to the onset of antisocial personality disorder (MayoClinic. com, 2010). Having a family history of mental illness, an unstable or chaotic family life as a child, loss of parents through traumatic means, and being subject to physical, sexual, or verbal abuse as a child increases the risk factors that a person will be diagnosed with antisocial disorder (MayoClinic. com, 2010).

There are approximately 8, 100, 000 people in the U. S. suffering from antisocial personality disorder and many more that display traits, but do not have the full disorder (Leedom, L. 2006). This disorder is known to affect men over women and is common in people that are in prison (ncbi. nlm. nih. gov). This disorder has many symptoms and complications that have to be dealt with on a daily basis by each person diagnosed with it. Symptoms of antisocial disorder are an indifference to right and wrong, continual lying and deceit, lack of remorse about hurting others, charming manipulation of others, and many more. These symptoms may be at their most forceful while the person is in their 20s and diminish over time (MayoClinic. com).

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Depression, suicidal behavior, risky sexual behavior, alcohol or substance abuse, and incarceration are just some of the complications that can occur for a person with antisocial

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personality disorder (MayoClinic. com, 2010).

If a doctor believes a person may have antisocial personality disorder a set of tests and exams are ordered to help rule out other problems and help find a diagnosis. Lab tests such as blood count, thyroid check and alcohol and substance checks are completed. A person will undergo a psychological evaluation so the doctor can find out the persons symptoms, behavior patterns, and whether they have thoughts of suicide or harming others, among other things. Blood pressure, heart rate, weight, and other vital signs will be checked at a physical examination. Since it is hard to diagnose antisocial personality disorder, the way the person interacts and relates to others will be used. Besides tests and evaluations certain criteria have to be met before a doctor can give a diagnosis of antisocial personality disorder. The DSM that is published by the APA lists being at least 18 years old, repeatedly breaking the law, lying to others, having no remorse or regard for safety, and symptoms of conduct disorder before age 15 as criteria an affected person must meet before a doctor can diagnose them with antisocial personality disorder. Evidence of this behavior will most likely have to be gathered by asking very detailed questions about the person's life because a person with this disorder will usually not give accurate accounts of their symptoms (MayoClinic. com, 2010).

Treatment of antisocial personality disorder is particularly difficult. People diagnosed may not want treatment or may feel that they don't need treatment. This personality disorder is not curable so a person will need careful, long-term care. Psychotherapy, medications, and hospitalization are treatments that are available. One or a combination of these will be used to treat each person, but it will depend on each person's particular case how they are treated for the

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disorder. There is no way to prevent a person from developing an antisocial personality. The best way is to try to identify the symptoms early, get appropriate treatment, and stick with it. This may keep the symptoms from getting worse (MayoClinic. com, 2010).

### Conclusion

Antisocial personality disorder is one of many personality disorders being treated today. The cause is shown in research to be a combination of genetics and environmental and life situations. There is no cure and treatment is based on each individual case.

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