

Sybil – college essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Sybil (originally created in 1976, and remade in 2007) told a story of a girl who was suffering from Dissociative Identity Disorder (also referred to as Multiple Personality Disorder). “Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) is a severe condition in which two or more distinct identities, or personality states, are present in—and alternately take control of—an individual” (Psychology Today). I have chosen this movie to correspond with Chapter 13 (Psychological Disorders) of our psychology book, and because psychological disorders grasps my attention the most within the subject of psychology.

If psychology were ever to be a possible major for me, I would focus more on this branch of it. Sybil seemed like a normal girl, living a simple quiet life as a substitute schoolteacher. After suffering a small breakdown in front of one of her classes (along with a few other episodes caused by memory lapses of very disturbing memories) she is seen by Dr. Cornelia Wilbur, a psychologist. After their first visit, Dr. Wilbur concludes that these incidents are related to a much deeper problem, and encourages Sybil to return for more treatment. Later that same night, Dr.

Wilbur receives a phone call from a girl named “Vickie” saying Sybil is about to jump out of a window. After coming to her rescue, Dr. Wilbur tells Sybil that she spoke to a girl named “Vickie”, to which Sybil had no recollection of. Sybil then breaks out in hysterical crying like a small child, and refers to herself as “Peggy”. At this very moment, Dr. Wilbur realizes Sybil is suffering from Multiple Personality Syndrome. During their next session, “Vickie” introduces herself to Dr. Wilbur as somewhat of the “leader personality”, having insight to every personality Sybil possesses, and informs Dr. Wilbur of the other ones.

There were 16 personalities she expressed in total, but only a few were presented more often than others. There's " Vickie" herself (13 years old), who very sophisticated and speaks very fluent French. " Vanessa" (12 years old), accounts for Sybil's musical abilities such as playing the piano (although Sybil never learned). " Peggy" (9 years old) accounts for Sybil's artistic abilities. During one session, " Peggy" actually draws images different faces, each representing a different personality.

She is the one who houses Sybil's greatest fears. " Mary" (no exact age) accounts for Sybil's memory of her grandmother, and portrays herself walking, talking, and acting like an old woman. " Marcia" (no exact age) accounted for Sybil's attempt to jump out the window in the beginning of the movie, because she is constantly thinking suicidal thoughts. " Ruthie" (no exact age) accounted for a less developed part of her, a baby in fact.

Although Sybil was clearly female, 2 of her personalities were actually male.

There was " Sid" (around 8 years old) who loves football, and wanted to be just like his father, and " Mike" (around 10) who wonders if he can still someday produce a child even though he resides in Sybil's body. Throughout their sessions, Dr. Wilbur concluded that a very traumatic event had happened during Sybil's early childhood, which literally caused her personality to shatter and split. Sybil was brutally abused and tortured by her mother as a child, and anything that reminds her of those terrible times makes her very paranoid and instantly blackout.

These memories are held by " Peggy", who fears anything that even slightly resembles a memory of her mother, and anytime these memories are

brought up, Sybil instantly turns into "Ruthie", and acts like she tries to escape from her mother during childhood days. During one session, Dr. Wilbur hypnotizes Sybil to distinguish why she is so frightened of the colors purple and green. The color purple indicates a time in which Sybil's mother had locked her in a small wheat bin.

Sybil thought she would surely suffocate, so she used a purple crayon to leave scratches on the inside of the bin, so someone would know she had been there. The color green indicates the green kitchen that was in her house, in which she also brutally abused by her mother in many different other ways. The only good memory that Sybil could recall frequently is of her grandmother, but she can't even enjoy it for long because that same, Sybil's mother had tripped her to make it seem like she fell down the stairs, and then brought her into a closed off room and repeatedly kicked her.

Towards the very end, Dr. Wilbur decides to hypnotize Sybil as a last resort to help her. She wants to introduce her to her other personalities, because in reality, she was never met them before. During this session, Sybil interacts with each personality, and somehow brings them together as one personality within her. In conclusion to the movie, Sybil is cured and lives on happy and relieved from her illness. One would wonder how such strange yet interesting disorders can come about within someone.

This disorder is usually caused by extreme sexual or physical abuse during the early stages of childhood. Throughout the years of constant study, the name had been changed due to expanding of information being recorded about it. " DID was called Multiple Personality Disorder until 1994, when the

name was changed to reflect a better understanding of the condition—namely, that it is characterized by a fragmentation, or splintering, of identity rather than by a proliferation, or growth, of separate identities” (Psychology Today).

When a person is recalling memories of such abuse and/or other traumatizing events, is it usually when they are experiencing something similar to it within their everyday life that reminds them. “ The dissociative aspect is thought to be a coping mechanism — the person literally dissociates himself from a situation or experience that’s too violent, traumatic, or painful to assimilate with his conscious self” (Mental Health Center). Some “ less dramatic” symptoms of this disorder can include: mood swings, depression, thoughts of suicide, sleep disorders, hallucinations, and many others.

More serious and common symptoms can include the inability to recall certain personal information that in no way could be ever forgotten, and of course expressing themselves as someone else, and acting in ways in which they normally would not. “ The ‘ alters’ or different identities have their own age, sex, or race. Each has his or her own postures, gestures, and distinct way of talking” (Mental Health Center). The change of personalities is referred to as “ switching”, namely because of how quickly it happens and how its literally a switch from one person to another.

There is no specific treatment for DID, other than seeking repetitive treatment from a psychologist or psychiatrist. Certain medications can be provided to aid in managing certain emotional symptoms that can occur, but

caution is exercised when prescribing it because it can possibly make the individual feel like they are being controlled, and re-traumatizing him/her. As a psychologist, dealing with someone who is acting so abnormally might be quite scary, but you have to look past that and examine the major events that they've been through to get to this point.

You need to have patience, and full understanding of those diagnosed in the past so you are never caught off guard. I would personally like to specialize in this branch of Psychology if I ever chose it as a major, because I feel as if these people can't help the fact they are they was they are. Traumatizing events happening in general are bad, but as a child, you are still in the process of development. Altering something so fragile and so harshly will obviously end in tragedies like this disorder.

These people feel like aliens, as if there is no one else out there that has ever experienced anything close to what they have. Even so, if someone can relate, it truly will never be the same because they were not there to experience it for themselves. Although there really isn't any true medical treatment for things like this, I feel as if this disorder, along with others like Schizophrenia, need to be more outline in psychology for the very fact of how much these individuals are suffering.