

DISSOCIATIVE DISORDERS

- Chapter 7

MEMORY AND DISSOCIATIVE DISORDERS

- Memory is key to one's identity - the sense of who we are and where we fit in our environment
 - Our past guides our reactions in the present / decisions for the future
 - People sometimes experience a major disruption of their memory, identity, or consciousness
 - When these lack a clear physical cause, they are called "**dissociative**" disorders

WHAT IS DISSOCIATION?

- A process in which different parts of an individual's identity, memories, or consciousness become split off from one another.
- Daydreaming is a common, mild form of dissociation.

DISSOCIATIVE DISORDERS

- Four types:
 - Dissociative Amnesia
 - Dissociative Fugue
 - Dissociative Identity Disorder
 - Depersonalization Disorder

DISSOCIATIVE AMNESIA

- 1+ episodes of inability to recall important personal information, usually of a traumatic or stressful nature, that is too extensive to be explained by ordinary forgetfulness.
- Episodic, not semantic memory, is affected.
- Types of amnesia that can be experienced:
 - Localized, Selective, Generalized, Continuous
 - No organic cause for the memory loss

DISSOCIATIVE FUGUE

- Localized (most common): loss of memory about events that took place within a limited period of time surrounding a traumatic event
- Selective: loss of some, but not all, memories about a given period of time
- Generalized: loss of memory extends beyond the period surrounding the traumatic event
- Continuous: forgetting continues into the present

ON FUGUES

- People with dissociative fugue not only forget their personal identities and details of their past, but also flee to an entirely different location
 - The fugue state can last from hours to months, and typically ends suddenly
 - There may be confusion about one's identity or, in more severe cases, people may take a new name and start a new life
 - Once the fugue is over, people generally regain most or all of their memories and do not experience a recurrence.
- Most cases are reported in adults.
- Onset usually related to traumatic, stressful or overwhelming life events.
- Duration may be determined by the extent of other problems, such as loss of employment or severe disruption of personal or family relationships.
- More common in the highly hypnotizable or those with a history of amnesia due to head injury.
- Only on resumption of their former identities do they recall past memories, at which time they become amnesic for experiences during the fugue episode.

DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER (diagnostic criteria)

A: The presence of two or more distinct identities or personality states.

- Alternate identities (subpersonalities or ALTERS) may have different names, genders, ages, personal characteristics, abilities, and physiological responses.

COMMON ALTER TYPES

- Child type: alters that are young children, who do not age as the individual ages, appear to be the most common type of alter.
- Persecutor type: alters that inflict pain or punishment on the other alters by engaging in self-mutilating acts.
- Helper type: alters that protect the weaker alters or control the switching between the alters.

B: At least two of these identities or personality states recurrently take control of the person's behavior.

- Generally there are three kinds of relationships between subpersonalities:
- Mutually amnesic
- Mutually cognizant
- One-way amnesic relationships

C: Inability to recall important personal information that is too extensive to be explained by ordinary forgetfulness.

- o The more passive identities tend to have more constricted memories, whereas the more hostile or controlling identities have more complete memories.

- DATA ON DID AND CONTROVERSY
- Limited data on prevalence
- Higher in US than elsewhere
- 3:1 ratio W:M
- Some noteworthy cases (e.g., 'Sybil') have been discredited years later

DEPERSONALIZATION DISORDER

- Frequent episodes in which people feel detached from their own mental processes or bodies, as if they are outside observers of themselves.
- Derealization also can occur - the feeling that the external world, too, is unreal and strange