



MONTHLY MENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER

Presented by the Gwinnett County Sheriff's Office Mental Health Task Force

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Paranoid Personality Disorder (PPD)



WHAT IS PARANOID PERSONALITY DISORDER (PPD)

PPD is a difficult and debilitating mental health condition where the sufferers are plagued by mistrust and suspicion so intense that it interferes with their thoughts, behavior, and daily functioning.

People with PPD may feel deeply guarded towards others, always vigilant for signs that someone is trying to cheat, mistreat, threaten or deceive them. No matter how much evidence is presented to the sufferer in efforts to re-assure them they are safe or misjudging the situation, they may continue to question the honesty, trustworthiness and motives of others even persons in their family and persons they have known for much of their life.

Diagnostic Criteria for PPD

According to the DSM-V, the patient must be at least 18 years of age and have a pervasive pattern of distrust and suspiciousness of others such that their motives are interpreted as malevolent, as indicated by at least 4 of the following manifestations:

- Suspects, without sufficient basis, that others are exploiting, harming, him or her.
- Is preoccupied with unjustified doubts about the loyalty or trustworthiness of friends or associates.
- Is reluctant to confide in others because of unwarranted fear that the information will be used maliciously against him or her.
- Reads benign remarks or events as demeaning or threatening.
- Persistently holds grudges (example; unforgiving of insults, injuries, or slights).
- Perceives attacks on his or her character or reputation that are not apparent to others and is quick to react with anger or to counterattack.
- Has recurrent suspicions, without justification, regarding fidelity of spouse or partner.

Exclusion: *Does not occur exclusively during the course of schizophrenia, or depressive disorder with psychotic features, or another psychotic disorder and is not attributable to the physiological effects of another medical condition.*

Signs and Behaviors

When they perceive they're being persecuted, rejected, or insulted/cheated, they're likely to respond with angry outbursts, controlling behavior, or by placing the blame on others.

The fearful, distrustful perceptions that accompany PPD can make forming and maintaining close relationships very difficult, affecting the sufferer's ability to function at home, work, and school. Families and loved ones of PPD sufferers may feel frustrated by their distorted view of the world, exhausted by their constant accusations, or just beaten down by their hostility and refusal to consider that they may be wrong about their paranoid feelings.

It can seem like they're able to find and exaggerate the negative aspects of any situation or conversation.

Treatment can help someone with PPD manage symptoms and improve their daily functioning. Yet, due to the nature of the disorder, most people with PPD don't seek help.

They suffer from such intrusive, pervasive thinking that they believe above all that their fears are justified and any attempts by others to change their mind only confirms their suspicions that people are "out to get them" in some way.

The more evidence that is presented to demonstrate their fears and suspicions are unwarranted the more the sufferer believes the presenter of such evidence means them harm or malice.

Treatment Options

Treatment for PPD focuses on psychotherapy. A therapist can help the sufferer build skills for building empathy and trust, improving communication and relationships, and better coping with PPD symptoms. Since the presence of others may fuel paranoid thoughts and anxious behavior, the PPD sufferer is more likely to benefit from individual rather than group therapy.

- Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) can help someone with PPD recognize their destructive beliefs and thought patterns.
- By changing how these beliefs influence their behavior, CBT can help reduce paranoia and improve how well sufferers interact with others.
- CBT can also help them learn better ways to deal with their emotions, beyond lashing out and holding bitter lifetime grudges.

REFERENCES

The G.C.S.O. Mental Health Tasks Force encourages you to utilize these and other sources such as the *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)* to learn more about this and other important mental health topics.
www.samhsa.gov

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9784-paranoid-personality-disorder>

<https://www.merckmanuals.com/professional/psychiatric-disorders/personality-disorders/paranoid-personality-disorder-ppd>

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, *Fifth Edition [DSM-5]*. APA, Washington D.C. 2013



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