

Hello class. So in today's lesson, we're going to talk about a disorder that's somewhat rare and less prevalent, especially compared to a lot of other disorders that you're probably familiar with. These disorders occur in only about 2% to 3% of the population. However, these disorders are very popular, because of the nature of the symptoms and impairments of very basic psychological functions, which I think people find very interesting, especially in the media today. And what we're referring to is dissociative disorders.

Dissociative disorders are any kind of disorder that involves the disruption or loss of a person's mental functioning or their mental identity. Now, this often comes from dissociation, which is actually a defense mechanism that a person has. It's a way of protecting the person from psychological harm. And often it's involuntary. And it can be damaging to a person as a result.

So dissociation is a way of preventing a person's sense of self from being harmed by removing it from any kind of traumatic or harmful situation or events. So if, for example, you might encounter something that's particularly stressful or can be particularly psychologically harmful, for example, being molested as a child is something that's often occurring with these disorders. Then what the person does, is they dissociate or they distance themselves from that traumatic event which often results in pulling away from their own identity and even forgetting about who they are.

So we're going to talk about several examples of these kinds of disorders. One example of a dissociative disorder is dissociative amnesia, which is where a person loses either part or all of their memory, particularly memory that's related to who they are as a person. Now in cartoons and TV, when you hear amnesia, you often see this resulting from a blow to the head. Maybe they got hit in the head with a coconut or anvil or something like that. And this might actually cause a loss of memory as well as a loss of other kind of mental or physical functioning. However, that's not what we're talking about when we say dissociative amnesia.

Now, when we say this as a mental disorder, we're actually referring to an amnesia that results in some kind of damaging event or some sort of emotional trauma that a person might have. So going back to our example, if a person is molested let's say, they might block that memory or they dissociated themselves from it. And that might also result in a loss of other types of memory as well. So they might lose significant portions of their childhood as a result of this traumatic event.

Probably the most extreme version of a dissociative disorder it's what we call dissociative identity disorder, which is also the rarest of these dissociative disorders. They only occur, according to some estimates, within one 100th to 1% of the population. Another name for dissociative identity disorder that's probably more familiar to people is multiple personality disorder, where a person has more than one different distinct personalities that

display themselves at different times as well. So in other words, a person appears to be a completely different person with different traits and abilities. And oftentimes, they don't have any kind of memory or they can't even mention that there are other personalities as well.

Now again, dissociative identity disorder is thought to occur, because of any kind of emotionally stressful situation or traumatic events. For example, again, child abuse comes into play here as well. However, there is some debate within psychologists as to if dissociative identity disorder is a real thing, and if they're actually has been a case in the past of this disorder. So that's something important to remember.

The most famous case of a dissociative identity disorder is Sybil, which is a woman actually named Shirley Ardell Mason, who is a psychological patient that was reported to have developed 16 different personalities as a result of severe sexual abuse, particularly when she was a child from her mother. She had a book that was written about her and two movies that were made based on her own story. However, several psychologists have challenged her claim to having these kinds of distinct identities, saying instead that she was extremely suggestible, and that her psychologist actually took advantage of her to gain fame himself, saying that she had these identities to the point where she believed she had those identities as well.

So this is an area of psychology that's a little bit gray. And it's up for debate right now. But it's an important one to recognize as being a disorder that people claim to be true. Now treatment of all of these different types of dissociative disorders involves creating a safe and comfortable therapeutic environment-- in other words, building a strong therapeutic alliance for relationship between the patient and the therapist, as well as the re-integration and the recovery of these lost elements of their selves, either their memories or their personalities. Now understanding and accepting the trauma that causes these things to occur can often help in the re-integration of these parts of their minds.