



SA Federation for
Mental Health

PERSONALITY DISORDERS

HISTRIONIC PERSONALITY DISORDER

What it is:

Histrionic personality disorder is characterised by persistent and excessive emotional behaviour, as well as attention seeking behaviour. This behaviour begins by early adulthood and will manifest in a variety of ways. Individuals with histrionic personality disorder feel the need to be the centre of attention at all times, otherwise they feel uncomfortable or unappreciated. If the individual is not the centre of attention, they may engage in behaviour designed to draw attention to themselves, such as making up stories, or creating a scene through dramatic behaviour. The individual may also behave in a sexually provocative and flirtatious manner towards others, even if the individual does not have a sexual interest or attraction towards the person, and this behaviour is often socially and professionally inappropriate. They may also consider relationships to be more intimate and close than they really are. The individual might be overly conscious of their physical appearance, and be very sensitive to any perceived criticism regarding the way they look.

Individuals with histrionic personality disorder typically have a style of speaking that is very dramatic and full of flair, but that lacks detail and depth. Their opinions are also likely to be easily influenced by those of others around them. Individuals with this disorder are known for over dramatization and expression of emotions, and they may act in emotionally inappropriate ways, for instance crying uncontrollably over a minor incident, or throwing public temper tantrums. These seemingly intense emotions can come and go quickly, which can give the impression that they are not heartfelt, but rather faked in an attempt to get attention.

Common symptoms:

1. The individual feels uncomfortable when they are not the centre of attention
2. Sexually flirtatious or inappropriate interactions with others
3. Rapidly changing emotions, that do not appear to be heartfelt
4. The individual frequently uses physical appearance to draw attention to themselves
5. The individual speaks in a way that is very dramatic and over the top, but that lacks depth and details regarding the topics being discussed

6. Dramatized, theatrical or exaggerated displays of emotion
7. The individual is easily influenced by others
8. The individual considers relations with others to be more intimate than they really are



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Causes:

Researchers are unclear as to what risk factors could contribute to histrionic personality disorder. Histrionic personality disorder has been associated with higher prevalence rates of somatic symptom disorder as well as depressive disorders. Histrionic personality disorder may also co-occur with antisocial, borderline, narcissistic and co-dependent personality disorders.