

Avoidant Personality Disorder

After researching this disorder, I was surprised to find that five percent of our US citizens live with a condition called Avoidant Personality Disorder, a disorder that both men and women suffer from. The intense hypersensitivity to rejection and feeling inadequate defines the disorder. Mental health professionals think this mental illness has both genetic and environmental factors, and doctors rarely find it in adolescents younger than 18 years of age. Without treatment, people with Avoidant Personality avoid social interaction, and this may inhibit their ability to function day to day.

Rarely, children as young as 2 years of age exhibit symptoms of Avoidant Personality Disorder. There is no way to know who will develop APD. People who have this disorder are shy as children, however, not every child who is shy goes on to develop this disorder. Likewise, not every adult who is shy has this disorder. Shyness, social isolation, avoiding strangers and avoidance to strange places is typical with people who suffer with this illness. Those with this disorder tend to be extremely sensitive and fear criticism or disapproval by others. Individuals with APD have a fear of rejection and may avoid social interaction altogether. If you have APD, your shyness most likely grew as you got older. It may have gotten to the point that you began avoiding other people and certain situations.

Your doctor may refer you to a mental health professional who will ask you questions to determine if you have APD. Treatment doesn't change your personality. You'll most likely always be shy and have some difficulty with social and work interactions. Treatment can, however, improve your symptoms and help you develop the ability to relate to others. A qualified therapist can help you to recognize and replace unhealthy behaviors and thoughts.

The FDA hasn't approved any medications to treat this personality disorder. Your doctor may, however, prescribe antidepressant medications if you have co-occurring depression or anxiety. Patients who are prescribed antidepressants for this disorder may or may not find them to be effective. Medications prescribed to patients with similar illnesses do not work for everyone. All medications prescribed to mental health patients are trial and error. I am a prime example of this phenomenon. It took multiple medications for me to get the right cocktail.

Other mental health disorders can occur along with avoidant personality disorder. Treatment in these cases are designed to help with the symptoms of each disorder. A few of the conditions that most frequently occur with avoidant personality disorders include social phobia, dependent personality disorder and borderline personality disorder.

Avoidant Personality Disorder, Ronald G Rossetti, MBA, Article # 18, Volume # 1, Series # 1
International Alliance for Mental Health (2020)