

Dissociation - an experience where a person may feel disconnected from himself and/or his surroundings.

- Highly associated with traumatic experience
- Some consider it a defense mechanism
- Patients often feel a blurred sense of identity
- Depersonalization - A sense of being detached from yourself.
- Derealization - A perception of the people and things around you as distorted and unreal.
- Ganser syndrome - Characterized by the use of approximate answers

Dissociative Amnesia (with Fugue)

- Dramatic dissociative episode in which the patient travels physically away from home or work and fails to remember important aspects of their identification.
- Often the patient takes on new identification, personality and employment.
- Fugues tend to last from a few days to months.
- Rare. More common in wartime or after natural disasters.

Dissociative Amnesia

- Inability to recall important personal information, usually of traumatic or stressful nature.
- Patient is typically aware of a gap in their memory.
- Intact memory for other information.
- More common in young women.
- May be acutely related to trauma, but more often chronic.

Dissociative Identity Disorder

- Chronic dissociative disorder in which two or more distinct personalities (alters) determine the behavior of the patient at different times.
- Usually associated with a history of chronic severe sexual or physical trauma in childhood.
- Presentation – 5-9 times more common in women. Can develop in young children, but late adolescence and early adulthood onset is most common. Suicide attempts, substance abuse and other self-destructive behavior is common.

Depersonalization Disorder

- Persistent or recurrent episodes of detachment or estrangement from one's self.
- The patient may complain of feeling like he or she is in a movie, or is an automaton, or detached from their body.
- Transient depersonalization is normal.
- More likely to occur in adolescents and young adults. Decrease with age.
- Episodes last from hours to weeks.

Dissociative Disorders Work Up

- Rule out amnestic syndromes, especially Transient Global Amnesia (reversible anterograde and retrograde memory loss with retention of basic biographic information usually occurring in elderly or middle aged men, lasting several hours and likely related to TIA), sleepwalking, seizures, and delirium.
- Consider drug intoxications (especially hallucinogens, dissociative anesthetics, and designer amphetamines).

Dissociative Disorders Treatment

- Treatment is usually supportive in the acute phase as memory usually returns.
- Treat comorbid depression, anxiety, substance abuse.
- If related to trauma: therapy aimed at understanding painful memories/experiences .
- If DID, insight oriented therapy with goal of integration of personality.