

One pattern that seems to be consistent is the increase in the frequency of forms of this disorder. This is due to the expansion of the definition which now includes more people at the lower end of the continuum. Lund (1993:4) tells us that the numbers have risen dramatically. “Today the estimate is one percent of the adult population has multiple personalities....Many multiples lead fairly normal lives and have families, jobs, homes, stress and enjoyment.”

Rivera (1991:8) spells out the symptoms for us. “There are clusters of symptoms that should raise a level of suspicion regarding multiple personality or severe dissociation in a child. ....when a child exhibits six to eight of these symptoms, an exploratory interview by a clinician...is indicated.

#### Childhood Multiple Personality Predictors

1. Sustained, repeated abuse
  2. Self-mutilation
  3. Marked changes in personality – labile, changes in handedness, voice, etc.
  4. Rapid shifts in behavior – sudden regressions, miming adult behavior
  5. Variations in skills and abilities (inconsistent school behavior)
  6. Witnessed disavowed behavior (often called a liar)
  7. Sleepwalking
  8. Abnormal sexual precocity
  9. Reference to self in third person; desire to be called different name
  10. Psychogenic illness, pseudo-seizures
  11. Polarized behavior (extremely aggressive – too good).”
- 1a. Amnesia for abuse.
  - 2a. Daze or trance-like states
  - 7a. Reported auditory hallucinations
  - 8a. Imaginary companions beyond the age of 6,7,8
  - 10a. Unusual forgetfulness

After we have observed these symptoms, we can suspect the affliction but will need further perspective as shared by Behrs (1982:83) who further describes the definition.

“Criteria for diagnosing multiple personality are explicitly set forth in the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-III):

- A. At any one time the individual is dominated by one of two, or more, distinct personalities.
- B. The personality that is dominant in consciousness at any given time determines the nature of the individual’s behavior.
- C. Transition from one personality to another is sudden. Each individual personality is complex and integrated with memories, behavior patterns, and social associations.”

After identifying the symptoms and further descriptions we begin to see a pattern but we won’t get a real perspective until we see the early childhood exposures that Lund (1993:6) describes.

“Multiple personality is a coping technique developed by little people who are hurt by big people. Multiple personality disorder is an outcome of dissociating serious, early childhood trauma. Dissociation is an unconscious defense mechanism that allows your thought and feelings to separate from your main stream of thought.”

The analogy of a war against children is the poignant description set forth by words of Rivera (1991:2) and it makes us wish that we could have chosen a subject with a less violent dynamic.

“Multiple personality is a posttraumatic stress condition with major dissociative features. The criteria...to be diagnosed....are as follows:

- a.) The existence within an individual of two or more distinct personalities
- b.) or personality states...  
Each of these personality states at some time, and recurrently, takes full control of the individual’s behavior.”

**The sub-clinical manifestations of these symptoms will not lead to a diagnosis on the low end of the continuum but they will always be a factor in “who” one is and “how” ones feels.**

As with everything in life, Multiple Personality Disorder does not have to stay a negative influence. Frankl (1984:89) quotes from Nietzsche: “Was mich nicht umbringt, macht mich starker. (That which does not kill me, makes me stronger.)”

Hocking (1992: viii) describes how that applies to Multiple Personality Disorder.

“MPD has more to teach us about the human mind, and how human beings cope with trauma, than any other diagnosis. MPD is not strange, weird, bizarre or incomprehensible: it is the characteristic human response to severe, chronic childhood trauma....What the person with MPD has done to survive severe trauma, everyone does to a lesser degree in life.”