

What is DID?

DID is defined by the presence of two or more distinct identities or personality states that recurrently take control of behaviour. This disorder represents the failure to integrate various aspects of identity, memory, and consciousness. Characteristics of this disorder are memory disturbances and amnesia. In contrast to other dissociative disorders, the degree of amnesia experienced in DID is usually asymmetrical. That is, it selectively involves different areas of autobiographical information, i.e., alters (personality states or identities) differ in the degree of amnesia for the experiences of other alters and the access to autobiographical information. Usually there is a primary or host personality that carries the patient's given name. Often the host is not completely aware of the presence of alters. Because of the presence of amnesic barriers, different personalities may have varying levels of awareness of the existence of other personalities. On average there are 2 to 4 personalities present at the time of diagnosis, and usually up to 13 to 15 personalities are discovered during the course of treatment. The DSM-5 has now included pathological spirit possession under DID. Spirit possession is typically characterised by a temporary alteration of consciousness defined by the replacement of the usual sense of identity by another one (which may be recognized as an ancestor or a spiritual force), stereotyped behaviours attributed to the possessing entity, and typically full or partial amnesia for the possession episode. Most spirit possessions are not pathological and are associated with religious or other rituals. Research has shown that many if not most devotees who experience possession in a ritual setting evidence good psychological adjustment. Nonetheless, in some cases in both industrialised and nonindustrialized societies, possessions may occur outside of cultural norms, be dysfunctional, and/or produce distress, thus becoming pathological.

Source <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/neuroscience/dissociative-identity-disorder>

Dissociation is a disconnection between a person's thoughts, memories, feelings, actions or sense of who he or she is. This is a normal process that everyone has experienced. Examples of mild, common dissociation include daydreaming, highway hypnosis or "getting lost" in a book or movie, all of which involve "losing touch" with awareness of one's immediate surroundings.

During a traumatic experience such as an accident, disaster or crime victimisation, dissociation can help a person tolerate what might otherwise be too difficult to bear. In situations like these, a person may dissociate the memory of the place, circumstances or feelings about the overwhelming event, mentally escaping from the fear, pain and horror. This may make it difficult to later remember the details of the experience, as reported by many disaster and accident survivors.