



## MONTHLY MENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER

Presented by the Gwinnett County Sheriff's Office Mental Health Task Force

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### Histrionic Personality Disorder



### WHAT IS HISTRIONIC PERSONALITY DISORDER (HPD)?

HPD is characterized by constant attention-seeking, emotional overreaction, and seductive behavior. People with this condition tend to overdramatize situations, which destroy relationships and lead to depression and emotional breakdowns.

Their levels of emotional reactions are usually not congruent to the actual situation. People with this disorder are uncomfortable or feel unappreciated and even angry when they are not the "center" of attention. They are highly suggestible, and easily influenced by others.

#### Diagnostic Criteria for HPD

The patient must have a persistent pattern of excessive emotionality and attention seeking behavior.

*This pattern is shown by the presence of ≥ 5 of the following by early adulthood:*

Discomfort when they are not the center of attention

Interaction with others that is inappropriately sexually seductive or provocative

Rapidly shifting and shallow expression of emotions

Consistent use of physical appearance to call attention to themselves

Speech that is extremely impressionistic and vague, self-dramatizing, theatrical, and extravagant

Suggestibility (*easily influenced by others or situations/trends*)

Interpretation of relationships as more intimate and serious than they are in reality

#### Signs and Behaviors

Persons with HPD will dress and act in inappropriately seductive and provocative ways, not just with persons they are attracted to, but in everyday context like work or school. They are obsessed with how they look. They derive their self-value from outside persons (*even strangers*) and not from within. This need for admiration from strangers or even casual acquaintances causes them to be very suggestible and easily influenced by others as well as current trends.

They speak dramatically, expressing strong opinions, but with few facts or details to support their opinions. They tend to be too trusting. They often think relationships are closer than they really are which leads to feelings of rejection and anger.

They can become bored easily which can cause them to change jobs and friends frequently. Delaying gratification is very frustrating to them. Therefore their actions are often motivated by a need for immediate satisfaction without attention to potential consequences. They may try to control their partner using seductiveness or emotional manipulations while becoming very dependent on the partner. Even so, they have difficulty realizing "real" intimacy. They are willing to play many roles (*often without realizing it*) to get attention.

#### Treatment Options

As with all personality disorders the effectiveness of the treatment depends completely on the willingness of the individual to recognize their need for change and do the work it requires.

It should be remembered that HPD is a personality disorder that is derived through maladaptive development in one's growth towards adulthood. Therefore, consistent, well structured Cognitive Behavioral Therapy or Dialectical Behavioral Therapy provided by a Licensed Psychotherapist experienced with this difficult personality disorder will be their best chance for growth and health. It should also be understood that the first attempts at therapy often fail with this group, but that does not mean we should not keep promoting the need for treatment. Those that do maintain a well structured course of therapy can improve.

#### REFERENCES

The G.C.S.O. Mental Health Tasks Force encourages you to utilize sources such as the *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)* to learn more about this and other important mental health topics.  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9743-histrionic-personality-disorder>

<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/personality-disorders/what-are-personality-disorders>

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, *Fifth Edition [DSM-5]*. APA, Washington D.C. 2013



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