



A Family Guide To Understanding Personality Disorders In Persons With Mental Retardation And Developmental Disabilities (MR/DD)

A personality disorder implies that an individual has behaviors or attitudes that cause social or professional malfunctions. Personality disorders are rare in persons with moderate or severe mental retardation; however, these conditions occur in persons with mild retardation.

Doctors, social workers, and other healthcare professionals may have had difficult experiences with persons who have personality disorders. The possible negative impact of a personality disorder diagnosis requires great care in making this diagnosis. Persons with mild mental retardation may have personality disorders that cause serious behavioral, social, or legal problems. Symptoms of some personality disorders can be improved with psychotherapy where the patient discusses feelings or experiences; however, few of these disorders respond to medications. Doctors can identify three groups of personality disorders called “Clusters”. Persons with Cluster-A personality disorders often have trouble with thinking. People with Cluster-B personality disorders have troubles with impulse control, control of emotion, or difficulties with criminal behavior. Cluster-C personality disorders have troubles with existing dependent behavior.

The diagnosis of a personality disorder requires that the doctor know your patient extremely well, and examine the patient over an extended period of time. The diagnosis of personality disorder in a person with mental retardation is a clinical diagnosis based on careful documentation and information. Paper and pencil tests will not diagnose personality disorders. Only a psychiatrist or a psychologist with expertise in persons with developmental disorders can make a diagnosis of personality disorder in a person with mental retardation.