

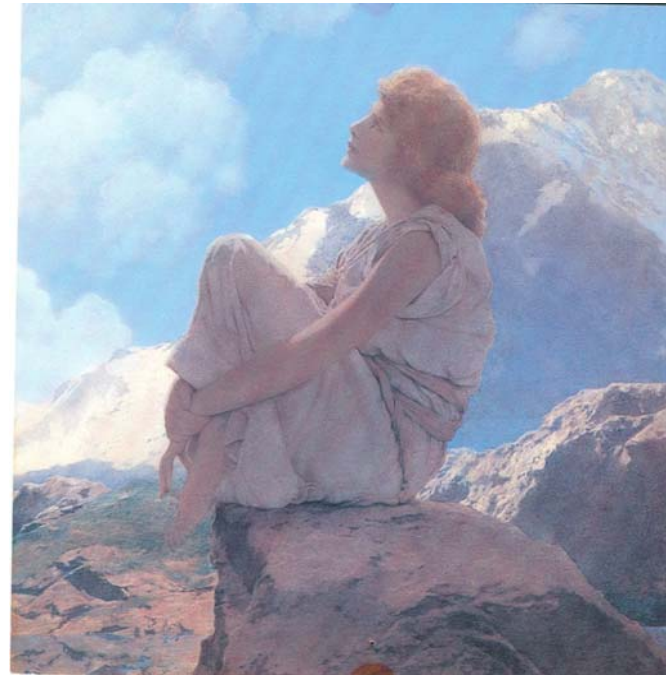
What can help people suffering such difficulties is a sense of acceptance and being listened to and understood. A sense of safety which includes consistent people and places where they can become attached while working through their difficulties, is very important, as is a swift response when in crisis, be it any time of the day or night. Medication has helped some to cope with difficult thoughts and feelings, however, when that person is ready and able, psychological therapies can help to heal the unresolved trauma they experience.

The Haven Project is dedicated to the support and treatment of people diagnosed with Personality Disorder.

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WHAT IS PERSONALITY DISORDER?



THE HAVEN PROJECT

This leaflet is an effort to define conditions that are often labelled as Personality Disorder. Clients who have the diagnosis have helped to compile it and to give an insight about causes, symptoms and what helps. This information is intended for clients, carers, family and friends, and anyone who wishes to gain an insider's view about this condition.

Personality Disorder is a controversial diagnosis. It seems to cover such a wide range of people and some are unhappy that they have received this diagnosis, while others may not even know that they have been given it. The psychiatric manual says many things about this diagnosis and even professionals sometimes disagree about what it is and who should be given it.

Local research, carried out by people with the diagnosis, has shown that most have suffered significant trauma in their lives, usually in childhood and sometimes in adolescence. Experiences range from child abuse and can, for example, include a shocking bereavement or perhaps long-term difficulties in that person receiving healthy responses to their emotions in earlier life. Some have subsequently lived through later, shocking incidents that have triggered earlier difficulties. This is because the early damage done to that person has not always allowed for the

normal development of relationships, or helped them to form nurturing relationships, or to be able to deal with life crises.

Whatever the specific causes for each individual, they are often left with a very damaged sense of self and little or no self-esteem. The world can seem like a place to which they don't belong and they may easily experience a sense of terrible rejection. For some, this can result in severe depression and anxiety states causing disturbed thoughts and even disturbing voices, a dissociated feeling of being "out of it", or agoraphobia, mood swings and suicidal feelings. Life may become a terrible struggle to negotiate on a daily basis.

People with such difficulties are often unable to cope with overwhelming thoughts and feelings. They may begin to self-harm by cutting themselves for a sense of relief, or overdosing, and sometimes making serious suicide attempts. They may develop eating disorders or use other negative coping strategies such as alcohol or drug misuse. For a minority, suffering so badly and feeling so misunderstood, it can result in offending, aggressive or assaultive behaviour.

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