

# Stonebriar Psychiatric Services News & Views

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#### **Services We Offer**

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#### **Treatment for**

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Eating Disorders  
Bi-polar Disorder  
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Disorder  
Compulsive Behaviors  
such as sexual  
addiction  
Post-traumatic Stress  
Disorder from past  
abuse  
Relational issues  
Adjustment to life  
changes

#### **Ages Served**

Adult  
Adolescent  
Children ages 10 & up

## "He Was a Most Peculiar Man..."

*"He was a most peculiar man. He lived all alone within a house, within a room, within himself. A most peculiar man. He had no friends, he seldom spoke, and no one in turn ever spoke to him, 'cause he wasn't friendly and he didn't care, and he wasn't like them. Oh, no! He was a most peculiar man..."*

As many of you may recognize, these are lines out of a song written by Paul Simon entitled, "A Most Peculiar Man," and might well summarize the individual with a schizoid personality disorder. This individual generally shows a lifelong pattern of being rather socially isolated, extremely shy and introverted, and often very uncomfortable in social interactions. He or she tends to show little in the way of emotional expression and is often seen by others as being lonely and eccentric. It should also be stressed that schizoid personality is not the same as schizophrenia.

It is somewhat difficult to define how common schizoid personality disorder is, in part because these individuals rarely attract any attention to themselves. It is estimated that it may affect approximately 8% of the general population, and some studies have suggested that it may affect males more often than females. Individuals with schizoid personality often hold jobs in which they function in a rather solitary manner with little social interaction with others, frequently involving night shift work or working in very isolated settings.

Individuals with schizoid personality disorder often come across to others as being very distant and emotionally cold or aloof. They generally do not involve themselves with other individuals in terms of daily events or activities, and to most they would appear to be very quiet, distant, and reclusive. It seems as though they live out their lives with little need for emotional contact with others, and frequently they have little knowledge or concern about current events that may be going on around them. Throughout his life the schizoid individual has often tended to be involved in rather solitary and frequently noncompetitive activities and often has jobs that others have tended to find difficult to tolerate because of the loneliness and isolation that is required. Frequently, their sexual development may be delayed with most of their sexual life occurring primarily in fantasy because of their overall difficulty in achieving intimacy with other persons. The schizoid individual also has difficulty with emotional expression, particularly with anger and other emotions of passion.

However, the schizoid individual may be able to get highly involved and invested in their nonhuman interests such as mathematics or science. They may also tend to be highly invested in animals and pets, and she can also become strongly involved in social causes of both philosophical and practical bent, as long as it does not require a great deal of personal involvement or social interaction.

As previously mentioned, it is important to recognize that schizoid personality does not represent schizophrenia, and these individuals have a normal capacity to recognize reality and do not generally exhibit evidence of psychosis or psychotic behavior. In general, the schizoid individual engenders either feelings of fear in others because of their perceived eccentricity, or else sadness because of their perceived loneliness.

## ***Diagnosis and Treatment of Schizoid Personality Disorder***

In terms of diagnosis, the schizoid individual often finds the initial psychiatric interview to be quite uncomfortable. He frequently has difficulty with eye contact, and, like with many conversations he may have outside of the office, it frequently feels as though he is anxious for the interaction to end. His emotional expression (affect) frequently seems rather blunted and constricted. In reality, many schizoid individuals are actually experiencing anxiety and fear when it comes to social interactions. He or she will frequently respond with short answers to direct questions, and generally offer little in the way of spontaneous conversation or comments. Outside of this feeling of distance, the usual mental status exam may seem quite normal.

The DSM-IV-TR describes the schizoid personality disorder as "a pervasive pattern of detachment from social relationships and a restricted range of expression of emotions in interpersonal settings, beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts." It also must include at least four of the following characteristics: "1) neither desires nor enjoys close relationships, including being part of a family; 2) almost always chooses solitary activities; 3) has little, if any, interest in having sexual experiences with another person; 4) takes pleasure in few, if any, activities; 5) lacks close friends or confidants other than first-degree relatives; 6) appears indifferent to the praise or criticism of others; and 7) shows emotional coldness, detachment, or flattened affectivity." It is also required that these characteristics not occur during the course of schizophrenia or other psychiatric or medical disorders that might be diagnosed and which might cause the symptoms.

In trying to distinguish schizoid personality disorder from other disorders, family history is important. In contrast with individuals with schizophrenia or with what is known as schizotypal personality disorder, there is generally not a history of schizophrenia in the family and frequently the individual may have a successful work history, even though isolated. Individuals with paranoid personality, which we have discussed in previous newsletters, may have some characteristics which are similar, but they generally tend to exhibit more in the way of social interactions with others, potentially with aggressive interactions, and may also tend to project their own feelings onto others. Although individuals with obsessive compulsive and avoidant personality disorders may frequently appear emotionally constricted, they generally do not tend to be as socially isolated and tend to have a greater history of social engagement with others than does the schizoid individual.

Frequently the social isolation may be noted even in early childhood and tends to be lifelong and persistent. The use of medication has limited, but at times beneficial, effects and often seems to be most helpful in diminishing the social anxiety or at times the sensitivity to perceived rejection by the individual with schizoid personality disorder. Psychotherapy can be potentially beneficial but often requires an extended period of time and contact. The initial goal needs to be the development of trust, which represents a significant issue for the schizoid individual. It has been noted that as this develops, the schizoid individual may become "...devoted, if distant, patients." Feeling safe and not judged, they may reveal a rather broad and varied fantasy life, including imaginary friends, and an extremely strong fear of their own dependency needs. The schizoid individual may have difficulty in getting involved in group therapy, but eventually may feel safe enough to participate if adequately protected initially from the pressure of other group members to not be so silent.

Unfortunately, many of these individuals may live out lives in solitude and quiet desperation, never feeling able to share their feelings or their life with another. As with the "most peculiar man" in the song by Paul Simon, some may also sadly decide to end their life before anyone notices that they are there. But sometimes... these individuals may respond to a friend or neighbor who is willing to persistently reach out to try and establish some type of human contact with this individual, someone that otherwise feels quite alone in this world.



Do you have topical requests for future newsletters? Let us know at: NewsletterQuestions@stonebriarps.com



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