



DISSOCIATION

What is Dissociation?

Dissociation is the term used to describe a psychological experience whereby a person feels disconnected from their personal history, their emotions, their sense of self, or even their body. It is sometimes referred to as an out-of-body experience.

Although there are several specific types of dissociative disorders, such as Dissociative Identity Disorder (previously known as 'Multiple Personality Disorder') or Dissociative Amnesia, the two most common experiences associated with trauma are Depersonalisation and Derealisation.

If you're having symptoms of Dissociation, such as Depersonalisation and Derealisation, you may want to contact your doctor (GP) to discuss this, as these symptoms can be scary to experience

What causes Dissociation?

Dissociation is the mind's way of coping with extreme trauma or stress. It could be seen as a kind of defence mechanism where people distance themselves mentally from the traumatic event.

Dissociation can also be associated with various other mental health conditions, such as Borderline Personality Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, Schizophrenia, and so on, though you do not necessarily have a mental illness if you experience dissociation from time to time.

What are Depersonalisation and Derealisation?

Depersonalisation is the experience of feeling as though one isn't real, as if you're detached from your emotions. It's sometimes described as a numbness, or as if you're only observing yourself from the outside. This is the 'out-of-body' experience. Some people describe the experience as if they are watching a movie.

Derealisation is very similar, but you may feel as though the world or people around you aren't real, or you may also experience visual distortions like the size and shape of objects moving

Further Reading

If you experience symptoms of dissociation, you might also want to read our guides on breathing techniques, distraction and grounding techniques, and meditation and mindfulness. You may also want to read our guides on PTSD, Complex-PTSD, and Borderline Personality Disorder.