



**Mental Health America of Franklin County**

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## **Dissociation and Dissociative Disorders**

### **What is Dissociation?**

Dissociation is a mental process that causes a lack of connection in a person's thoughts, memory and sense of identity. Dissociation seems to fall on a continuum of severity. Mild dissociation would be like daydreaming, getting "lost" in a book, or when you are driving down a familiar stretch of road and realize that you do not remember the last several miles. A severe and more chronic form of dissociation is seen in the disorder Dissociative Identity Disorder, once called Multiple Personality Disorder, and other Dissociative Disorders.

### **How Common is Dissociation?**

Transient and mild dissociative experiences are common. Almost one third of people say they occasionally feel as though they are watching themselves in a movie, and 4% say they feel that way as much as one third of the time. The incidence of these experiences is highest in youth and steadily declines after the age of 20.

7% of the population may have suffered from a dissociative disorder at some time. But these disorders are difficult to identify and may go undiagnosed for many years.

### **Other Forms of Dissociation**

Other dissociative disorders include "psychogenic amnesia" (the inability to recall personally significant memories), "psychogenic fugue" (memory loss characteristic of amnesia, loss of one's identity, and fleeing from one's home environment), and "multiple personality" (the person has two or more distinct personalities that alternate with one another. This is also known as "Dissociative Identity Disorder" or "Multiple Personality Disorder").

### **Treatment**

When dissociative experiences are the central, chronic, and overwhelming problem, treatment usually demands long-term individual psychotherapy. People with these disorders often have good reasons to mistrust authority as well as a lifelong habit of keeping secrets from themselves and others. A working alliance must be established with an often demoralized and suspicious person who believes the world is unjust or that he/she is an evil person.

### **Other Resources**

#### **The International Society for the Study of Dissociation**

8201 Greensboro Drive, Suite 300

McLean, VA 22102

Phone Number: (703) 610-9037

Fax Number: (703) 610-9005

Website: [www.issd.org](http://www.issd.org)

**Sidran Institute**

200 E. Joppa Road, Suite 207

Towson, MD 21286

Phone Number: 410-825-8888

Toll-Free Number: 888-825-8249

Fax Number: 4110-337-0747

Email Address: [help@sidran.org](mailto:help@sidran.org)

Website URL: [www.sidran.org](http://www.sidran.org)

**Mental Health America of Franklin County** is a private, not-for-profit organization, established in 1956. We help people navigate the mental health system. We are dedicated to promoting mental health in Franklin County through advocacy, education, and support services. Our programs include: information and referral to community mental health and alcohol/drug services; free support groups for people with mental illness and their families; an Ombudsman program that assists clients in navigating the mental health and alcohol/drug system; mental health screenings in English and Spanish; Pro Bono Counseling Program where underinsured and uninsured individuals can receive free counseling; community and professional mental health education including Get Connected; maternal mental health support and advocacy (POEM); and a quarterly newsletter featuring legislative updates and new happenings at MHAFC. We receive funding from the Franklin County ADAMH Board, United Way of Central Ohio, individuals, foundations, and corporations. To become a member or find out more information, please visit us online at [www.mhafc.org](http://www.mhafc.org).