



MOOD DISORDERS ASSOCIATION OF MANITOBA INC.

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Sadistic Personality Disorder

Source: American Psychiatric Association (APA),
Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Third Edition, Revised

The Disease Perspective

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Third Edition, Revised* (American Psychiatric Association, 1987), for research purposes, described Sadistic Personality Disorder as a pervasive pattern of cruel, demeaning and aggressive behaviour, beginning by early adulthood, as indicated by the repeated occurrence of at least four of the following:

- Has used physical cruelty or violence for the purpose of establishing dominance in a relationship (not merely to achieve some non-interpersonal goal, such as striking someone in order to rob him or her);
- Humiliates or demeans people in the presence of others;
- Has treated or disciplined someone under his or her control unusually harshly, e.g., a child, student, prisoner, or patient;
- Is amused by, or takes pleasure in, the physiological or physical suffering of others (including animals);
- Has lied for the purpose of harming or inflicting pain on others (not merely to achieve some other goal);
- Gets other people to do what he or she want by frightening them (through intimidation or even terror);
- Restricts the autonomy of people with whom he or she has a close relationship, e.g., will not let spouse leave the house unaccompanied or permit teen-age daughter attend social functions;
- Is fascinated by violence, weapons, martial arts, injury, or torture.

The behaviour has **not** been directed toward only one person (e.g., spouse, one child) and has **not** been solely for the purpose of sexual arousal (as in Sexual Sadism).

The Dimensional Perspective

Here is a hypothetical profile, in terms of the five-factor model of personality, for Sadistic Personality Disorder:

➤ ***High Neuroticism***

Chronic negative affects, including anxiety, fearfulness, tension, irritability, anger, dejection, hopelessness, guilt, shame; difficulty in inhibiting impulses: for example, to eat, drink, or spend money; irrational beliefs: for example, unrealistic expectations, perfectionistic demands on self, unwarranted pessimism; unfounded somatic concerns; helplessness and dependence on others for emotional support and decision making.

➤ ***High Extraversion***

Excessive talking, leading to inappropriate self-disclosure and social friction; inability to spend time alone; attention seeking and overly dramatic expression of emotions; reckless excitement seeking; inappropriate attempts to dominate and control others.

➤ ***High Openness***

Preoccupation with fantasy and daydreaming; lack of practicality; eccentric thinking (e.g., belief in ghosts, reincarnation, UFOs); diffuse identity and changing goals: for example, joining religious cult; susceptibility to nightmares and states of altered consciousness; social rebelliousness and nonconformity that can interfere with social or vocational advancement.

➤ ***Low Agreeableness***

Cynicism and paranoid thinking; inability to trust even friends or family; quarrelsomeness; too ready to pick fights; exploitive and manipulative; lying; rude and inconsiderate manner alienates friends, limits social support; lack of respect for social conventions can lead to troubles with the law; inflated and grandiose sense of self; arrogance.

➤ ***High Conscientiousness***

Overachievement: workaholic absorption in job or cause to the exclusion of family, social and personal interests; compulsiveness, including excessive cleanliness, tidiness, and attention to detail; rigid self-discipline and an inability to set tasks aside and relax; lack of spontaneity; overscrupulousness in moral behaviour.

Specific Affects

- Feelings of impotence, shame and doubt
- Bitter frustration, feelings of helplessness
- Impotent rage
- Fears of persecution

The Behaviour Perspective

Motivations

- Wants to gain power and control over the self and over outside objects
- A driving need to dominate
- Wants to have an impact on others
- Wants to gain validation of his own being, his importance, and his power by hurting and dominating others

Associated Disorders

Depression

The Life Story Perspective

Childhood

- Authoritarian parenting

Value System

- **Basic Belief:** I need power over others.
 - **Strategy:** Sadism
- I must dominate.
 - I must dominate in relationships, in the home, in all the groups to which I belong, and at work
 - I must be in control.
 - I must be in charge.
 - I must direct all activities.
 - I must shape the environment.
 - Power is the most important thing in life.
 - I hate everything that is not in myself.
 - The interests and feelings of others cannot be allowed to interfere with the accomplishment of my goals.
 - I should always be the one to give the orders and establish the rules.
 - Everyone who is under me should always do things my way.
 - I have to be a strict disciplinarian.
 - I know the best for everyone.
 - If people under me don't do things my way, they are being disloyal.
 - I'm used to being chief and I can't tolerate any challenges to my authority.
 - If anyone challenges my authority, I must punish them for their disloyalty and reassert my control.
 - Parents should train their children to be tough, courageous, and ambitious.
 - I expect my children to obey me without question.

- I am totally dedicated to my work and I won't be deterred by family life or needs for health and recreation.
- I require an intensely competitive, dog-eat-dog environment in which there can be only one winner.
- You can't be squeamish; you have to be ready to sacrifice others to accomplish your goals.
- The end is always more important than the means.
- Work (indeed all of life) is strategic combat, a struggle to get and to keep power.
- It's always the objective that counts; whatever means are expedient are justified.
- I'm less concerned with following the 'right' or 'honourable' course as with finding a practical, efficient, effective solution.
- I should be the one to create structure and organization, and plan strategy, because I'm the only one who can see the big picture.
- I focus on results, not feelings.
- I must function at high stimulation levels at all times, otherwise I get bored and don't know what to do with myself.
- I cannot tolerate lack of power, serious competitive threats, or defeat or failure.
- I must in all cases be working with and around other people.
- I cannot tolerate submitting to a greater power.

“Knowledge is power.”