



Essential Information

What is Antisocial Personality Disorder?

Antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) is a term used to describe a pattern of personality traits that involves the disregard of other people's feelings and rights and a lack of empathy for others. Sometimes this means that it is the people around the person with ASPD that are hurt or distressed by their actions. These problems begin in childhood or early adolescence and become stable in adulthood, affecting most areas of life.

Difficulties with behaving appropriately and following rules

People with ASPD experience difficulties complying with rules and socially acceptable or lawful behavior. This may lead to them getting into trouble with the law. People with ASPD may also display irritable, aggressive, or violent behavior. These conduct issues begin before the age of 15, and may include a disregard for authority or rules, destroying property, aggression and lying.

Relationships with other people

People who experience ASPD may act in ways that don't consider other people's feelings. They may act in ways considered deceitful or manipulative to get what they want, for example they may be charming when they want something, but become cold and dismissive once they have what they want. People with ASPD may act aggressively towards other people and may engage in physical fighting. They may not think about the safety of others or themselves before they act.

Difficulties with planning ahead and responsible behaviour

Individuals with ASPD often act in impulsive ways, and may find it difficult to plan ahead. They may make sudden changes without considering how this affects them or the other people around them. This disregard for safety and difficulty with planning may lead to harmful consequences. People with ASPD may also be irresponsible in several areas of their life. This could include repetitive absence from work or significant

periods of unemployment, failure to pay debts, and not supporting family members.

Empathy and responsibility for actions

In these areas, individuals with ASPD often show little concern for the negative consequences of their actions. They may blame victims of their behavior for being foolish, or act indifferently. People with ASPD may have difficulty showing empathy towards other people and instead focus on self-interests.

How common are these problems and why do they develop?

It is estimated that around 6.5% of the population experiences personality disorder problems, with a smaller number experiencing ASPD. The exact cause of these problems is unknown but it is thought to arise due to a combination of factors including:

- Biological factors – genetic or acquired
- Parenting styles that may send inconsistent messages
- Early life experiences – child abuse, neglect, death of parents, or other losses and trauma
- Challenging social circumstances and environment while growing up.

Can it be treated?

Psychological treatments provided by mental health professionals may assist people with ASPD tendencies. Structured approaches are important within a safe environment. For treatment and support contact your local health services.

