

Common Myths about Psychiatric Disorders

People with schizophrenia have a “split personality” or “multiple personality disorder.”

People with schizophrenia have only one personality. A split personality or multiple personality disorder is a very different psychiatric disorder (a “dissociative disorder”) that is quite rare.

Family cause psychiatric disorders.

Child-rearing practices, conflict, and poor communication in the family do not cause psychiatric disorders. Some disorders tend to “run in families” because of genetic factors, not because of problems between family members.

People with psychiatric disorder are often violent.

People with a psychiatric disorder are usually not violent. Although some clients are prone to violence when their symptoms worsen, most withdraw from others when their symptoms are severe.

Alcohol or drug abuse can cause long-term psychiatric disorders.

Available research suggests that substance abuse can trigger a psychiatric disorder in vulnerable people, but does not cause the disorder.

Psychiatric clients can control their symptoms if they really want to.

Psychiatric clients have not direct control over their symptoms than people with medical conditions such as hypertension or diabetes.

Psychiatric disorders are a sign of moral weakness.

Psychiatric clients are not morally weaker than other people. The symptoms of their disorder are due to biological factors that are beyond their control, not to moral inferiority.