



SA Federation for
Mental Health

PERSONALITY DISORDERS

SCHIZOTYPAL PERSONALITY DISORDER

What it is:

An individual with schizotypal personality disorder has great difficulty in establishing and maintaining close relationships with others. Individuals with this disorder may experience extreme discomfort within such relationships, and therefore have less of a capacity for them. Individuals with this disorder usually have cognitive or perceptual distortions as well as eccentricities in their everyday behaviour. Individuals with schizotypal personality disorder often have ideas of reference, which are incorrect interpretations of casual incidents and external events as having a particular and unusual meaning specifically for them. They may also be very superstitious, and believe in the supernatural and other magical phenomena which is not part of their cultural norm. Some individuals with this disorder may believe they have the ability to control others with their minds, or that they have the ability to see into the future. They may be overly suspicious of others, thinking that people are plotting against them. Eccentricities may also be exhibited in the way an individual speaks, or in the way they dress.

Individuals with schizotypal personality disorder are able to interact with others, and will do so when necessary. However these interactions often make them uncomfortable and may cause the individual a great deal of anxiety. This anxiety can also increase despite spending more time with specific people or in a specific environment. A diagnosis of schizotypal personality disorder should not be made if the behaviour occurs during the course of a mental disorder such as schizophrenia, bipolar or depressive disorder with psychotic symptoms, or autism spectrum disorder.

Common symptoms:

1. Ideas of reference, believing that everyday events, occurrences or casual remarks are all somehow related directly to the individual. For example the individual may see a group of people laughing, and immediately believe that the group is laughing at them
2. Superstitious belief in magic or the supernatural, for example believing that the individual has the ability to control others through mind power, or believing they can foresee or control the future
3. Hallucinations or bodily illusions. For example, the individual hears someone call their name even though they are alone in a room



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4. Odd thinking or speech patterns. For example, the individuals speech may be disorganised, using words or concepts out of place, or their speech may be very abstract or metaphorical
5. Suspiciousness of those around them
6. Inappropriate or limited emotional reactions, especially when in contact with others
7. Behaviour or appearance that is odd, or peculiar
8. The individual lacks close friends, other than perhaps first degree relatives
9. The individual experiences severe social anxiety, that does not lessen with familiarity and is associated with suspiciousness and paranoia

Causes:

Research has shown that there may be genetic and physiological risk factors associated with schizotypal personality disorder. The disorder appears to be more prevalent among first degree relatives of individuals with schizophrenia. Close relatives of individuals with schizotypal personality disorder may also have an increased risk of developing schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders.