

Sociopath qualities are difficult to treat

Sociopaths are diagnosed as having antisocial personality disorder, a mental health condition in which a person consistently shows no regard for right and wrong and ignores the rights and feelings of others. People with antisocial personality disorder tend to purposely make others angry or upset and manipulate or treat others harshly or with cruel indifference. They lack remorse and do not regret their behavior.

People with antisocial personality disorder often violate the law, becoming criminals. They may lie, behave violently or impulsively, and may have problems with drug and alcohol use. They have difficulty consistently meeting responsibilities related to family, work or school.

Some symptoms of antisocial personality disorder include repeatedly:

- Ignoring right and wrong.
- Telling lies to take advantage of others.
- Not being sensitive to or respectful of others.
- Using charm or wit to manipulate others for personal gain or pleasure.
- Having a sense of superiority and being extremely opinionated.
- Having problems with the law, including criminal behavior.
- Being hostile, aggressive or threatening to others.
- Feeling no guilt about harming others.
- Doing outrageous things with no regard for the safety of self or others.

Adults with antisocial personality disorder usually show symptoms of conduct disorder before the age of 15.

Symptoms of conduct disorder include serious, ongoing behavior problems, such as:

- Aggression toward other people.
- Disregard of others property.
- Lying and dishonesty.
- Serious violation of rules.

Antisocial personality disorder is considered a lifelong condition. But in a few individuals, certain symptoms may decrease over time. It's not clear whether this decrease is a result of the effect aging has on their mind and body, an increased awareness of the impact that antisocial behavior has had on their life, or other factors.

Antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) is psychiatry's forgotten disorder. Despite its enormous cost to individuals, families, and society, few clinicians diagnose ASPD, let alone offer treatment, and few researchers investigate it. Clinicians and researchers have largely distanced themselves from the disorder, perhaps in sympathy with family members and friends who react similarly.

Psychiatry has wrestled with the problem of chronic antisocial behavior for more than 200 years. While the terms and definitions used have shifted over the years, they all describe recurrent, serial misbehavior. People with ASPD rebel against authority, resist all norms, and push the limits of acceptable behavior. Nineteenth century British physician William Pritchard used the term *moral insanity* to describe people who willfully engage in antisocial conduct. His use of the term moral was prescient considering that many people he described appeared to lack a moral compass, perhaps ASPD's most disturbing aspect.

Treating ASPD is not straightforward. People with ASPD rarely seek treatment, usually only starting therapy when a court requires it.

There is a lack of evidence to support the effectiveness of psychological and pharmacological treatments for ASPD. However, medications can help with co-occurring conditions, such as aggressive behavior and impulsivity.

Managing the symptoms can be difficult, and there is a relatively high rate of people stopping their treatment early. Treatment focuses on achieving specific short-term goals, such as avoiding negative consequences for illegal behavior, rather than trying to change the person.

