

Dissociation Transcript

Video transcript for SHARE

Dissociative

Dissociative Disorders have their own section in the DSM-V; but like anxiety disorders, they are grouped next to the trauma and stress-related disorders based on their close relationship.

Dissociation in and of itself is sometimes viewed as a coping mechanism. Dissociative symptoms are also part of diagnostic specification criterion in the diagnosis of trauma and stress related disorders.

Dissociation sometimes is hard for people to understand. They have preconceived notions of what the dissociation is, and dissociation actually happens on a continuum. I can tell that at least half of you while watching this video have dissociated out at some point. On the small end of the continuum we have when we are like in a meeting or watching something that doesn't engage us or we just start going from being present in the meeting and taking notes to all of a sudden we're thinking about everything else we need to do. We've written the grocery list in our head, decided what the kids are going to have for dinner, and then we come back and think, "Oh my goodness, what did they just say?" Or how many of you have ever gotten into your car and you get into your car and you leave your house and you arrive at work and you have the zero memory of how you made it from Point A to Point B? Right? Most of us have done that. And, that's what we would talk about being on the very low end of the dissociation, but dissociation is a continuum.

So, let's think about this through the trauma lens because that's how we want to look at everything is through the trauma lens. Why would dissociation be important; why would it come into play for someone who's experienced trauma? Well, when we think about going back to our "fight, flight, or freeze," and we think about that part of not being able to get away, that you can't fight hard enough, you can't run fast enough; but you're there. Well, if I can't get away physically, what is one way my body and mind can protect me? By taking me away mentally or psychologically. And, so, part of where dissociation comes from is again a survival mechanism. It's a gift. It is something that helps protect your mind from an event that is so overwhelming it can't comprehend it. The problem is that just like with any other coping skill that once it works for us once, we then apply it anytime we're under stress. And, this is how we start moving into dissociative disorder where it becomes, it interrupts daily life.

[Visual with list of symptoms, which narrator reads orally (see below)]

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- *Dissociation* occurs when an individual mentally disconnect their thoughts feelings memories and or sense of identity.
- *Depersonalization* occurs when an individual feels detached from their mental processes or body. When they psychologically “leave one’s body” as if they’re watching themselves from a distance as an observer.
- *Derealization* occurs when an individual has a sense that what is taking place is unfamiliar or not real. It might seem dreamlike or distorted.

We’re now going to view a few clips that help demonstrate some of the possible symptoms out of dissociative symptoms.

Remember Me video clip:

GUY: The illustrations are pretty cool.

GIRL: Yeah, these are cool ...thanks. Um, where are we meeting Mom?

GUY: Guggenheim. What’s up with these girls?

GIRL: They think I’m weird. Sometimes I sort of space out.

GUY: What? When you’re drawing?

GIRL: Yeah. Other times too. Mademoiselle Fleishman has snapped her fingers at me a lot today...and everybody laughed. They all think I’m a freak of nature.

In this first scene out of *Remember Me*, we meet Caroline. And, Caroline is Tyler’s little sister; and she’s also been affected by their brother’s suicide. We’re seeing her on a normal school day. He’s picking her up from school and the other girls are making fun of her, and he’s like, you know, “What’s going on, what’s up with that?” And, she says that she spaces out; and he’s like, “Oh, so, like when you’re doing your art?” She’s like, “No, it’s not just when I’m doing my art. I space out a lot, and I space out during class” to where the teacher has to get her attention. And she says, “You know, the other kids just think I’m a freak of nature.” And, so we see how dissociation can sometimes appear in a classroom setting.

Fearless video clip:

(airplane, man plays computer game)

“You and that computer. You spend more time playing with it than producing anything.

[Hear stewardess in background offering coffee]

Relax. Will you just relax?

I'm fine. Did you hear that?

Max, this is a very important meeting. I need you to calm down. I need you to be with me today, all right? God, you're such a neurotic.

(stewardess serves passengers, camera catches television screen)

Something's not right. *(His friend continues his game. Suddenly there are plane noises as though it's been hit and is crashing.)*

(Captain's voice: This is your captain. Please return to your seats, put your tray tables down, and fasten your seatbelts.)

STEWARDESS: Ladies and Gentlemen, please be sure to fasten your seatbelt tightly around your waist. Hurry up. The flight attendants will be coming through to collect all your trays. Everything will be just fine. We just hit a little unexpected turbulence.

PASSENGER: I don't think this is turbulence.

Pilot in background mentions the hydraulic system.

MAX: The hydraulics! He can't steer! We're going down! *(He closes eyes. Stewardess collects loose items.)*

MAX looks out brightly lit window and thinks, "This is it. This is the moment of your death. I'm not afraid. I have no fear."

Our next scene is out of *Fearless*, and this is the actual crash scene. And, we see Max at the very first, and he's phobic of flying anyway. He has all these fears about flying and then the plane begins to crash. He's panicked. There's chaos all around him, and we're seeing how everyone's responding to this absolute fear of imminent death. And then all of a sudden, he sees the light from the window, everything goes quiet, and he says, "This is the moment of my death; I'm not afraid." And, you see him going from complete panic to complete calm; and this is a great example of what we call De-realization. And it's that sense of something not being real; that this isn't really happening. And, it removes him; and that falls under those dissociative symptoms.

[The Perks of Being a Wallflower video clip:](#)

GIRL: *(in lunch line as "outsider-type" boy passes by)* Hey, Nothing.

(He walks across cafeteria and is tripped intentionally by another boy seated at a table with friends.)

BOY WHO TRIPPED HIM: Oops, sorry, Nothing. *(laughs)*

PATRICK: *(After getting up, walks to the table of the boy who tripped him, asks different boy)* Are you going to do anything?

BOY HE SPOKE TO: What are you talking about?

PATRICK: I'm talking about how your pet ape just tripped me. Are you going to say something?

BOY HE SPOKE TO: Why would I?

PATRICK: You know why.

BOY HE SPOKE TO: This is pathetic, Man. Your fixation on me...

PATRICK: You want your friends to know how you got those bruises, really?

BOY HE SPOKE TO: I got jumped in the parking lot.

PATRICK: Where? Chinley Park? You guys know about Chinley Park?

BOY HE SPOKE TO: *(stands and moves threateningly close)* I don't know what kind of sick move you're trying to pull, but you'd better walk away right now, Nothing.

PATRICK: Fine. Say hi to your dad for me. *(He walks away.)*

BOY HE SPOKE TO: *(calling after him)* Whatever, Faggot.

PATRICK: *(turning back)* What did you just call me?

BOY HE SPOKE TO: I called you a faggot.

(PATRICK hits him. They both start fighting and fall on floor. SAM runs in, calling "Patrick." Other guys throw her aside as the table's threesome all beat up PATRICK.)

(Fade out. When scene fades back in, a different boy has become involved in the fight and knocked all the "bad guys" aside.)

NEW FIGHTER: Touch my friends again, and I'll blind you. *(He helps the BOY WHO FELL up.)*

(Scene changes to outside principal's office then to him exiting school.)

SAM: How are you doing, Charlie?

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CHARLIE: Oh, I don't know. I keep trying, but I can't really remember what I did.

SAM: Do you want me to tell you?

CHARLIE: Yeah.

SAM: You saved my brother. That's what you did.

CHARLIE: So, you're not just scaring me?

SAM: No.

CHARLIE: Can we be friends again?

SAM: Of course. *(they hug)* Come on.

And, then out of our last scene, it's out of *Perks of Being a Wallflower*. And again, we have Charlie, and he's in the lunch room but the scene begins with his friend Patrick, and Patrick's being bullied. You know, they're calling him "Nothing." They're tripping him, and finally it escalates to the point of an attack. Charlie comes to intervene; and when he steps up, the noises in the face go quiet and all of a sudden, his world goes dark. When he comes back, his hands are bruised and all the guys are on the floor nursing their bruises from what's occurred. We see that as he comes out of it and he's trying to figure out what's happening, he goes to see Sam and he tells her, "I keep trying but I can't really remember what I did." And that complete blackout is a great example of dissociation.

Dissociative Identify Disorder

On the other end of the spectrum we have dissociative identity disorder. Dissociative identity disorder generally occurs in children. It's more prevalent in girls than in boys, and the child usually has a pretty high intellect and is very high functioning and would be seen from the outside as a child that is highly resilient. What happens is this child goes through pervasive intense complex trauma and it's during their developmental stages and they actually form alter personalities. And, the alters are a gift, and they're there to help protect the child when the child can't protect himself. A lot of times these children don't get helped until they are adults. They may have other areas of their lives that they start having trouble functioning in. They may have a lot of the same symptoms you'd see with someone who has PTSD—the depression and anxiety. But, they're able to handle higher loads because of the alters. Many times when we're working with people who may be experiencing dissociation on their different places on the continuum, they may actually black out, they may lose memory, they may lose time. And, so, a lot of times when we're doing screening and assessment or working on story with them, they may tell us, "I don't remember that happening" or they just kind of lose

space and time even when they're with you. And, it's important to understand where that comes from and that they aren't lying, they aren't manipulating, but they're being very honest in that they may not remember the events that occurred.

The reason that this understanding dissociation is so important is that, just like with everything we talk about with traumatic stress, it's not something that's organic. It is something that the body and mind does to survive. It is something that happens as a result of that "fight, flight, or freeze" that we're all born with, that survival skill. So, we want to help people understand that symptom and then find ways to ground, to be present, and to find other ways of coping besides that.