



# Sociopath Definition: What Is A Sociopath?

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Published 04/27/2022

There are a lot of misconceptions about sociopathy and what it actually is. As with the media depictions of any mental health disorder or condition, movies and television don't always get the details right. Often, mentions of sociopathy or psychopathy occur in horror movies, thrillers, and even documentaries. The problem with many media depictions of sociopathy, in particular, is that they often stray far from reality, which is unhelpful and can cause a great deal of stigma. Often, depictions are so extreme that the general

public has no idea as to what the word “sociopath” means. You may have called someone a sociopath before, wondered if you are a sociopath, watched a movie with a character that was said to be a sociopath, or heard someone else call another person a sociopath. But, what does the term “sociopath” really mean? Could you or someone you know be a sociopath? Keep reading to learn more.

### **Sociopath Defined**



A sociopath is someone who actually has a diagnosable mental health condition. That mental health condition is called antisocial personality disorder or ASPD. Antisocial personality disorder or ASPD is a diagnosable mental health disorder characterized by a group of criteria listed in the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders or DSM. The DSM lists a variety of mental health disorders and provides the diagnostic criteria that medical and mental health professionals use to diagnose conditions.

While you might think of sociopathy as “very rare” or “scary,” antisocial personality disorder actually affects about 3.6% of the United States population, and it is diagnosed more frequently in men than it is in women, with about 3% of adult men and 1% of adult women receiving a diagnosis of antisocial personality disorder. There is no cure for the condition, but there is treatment available that can help people with antisocial personality disorder. The tricky component of treating antisocial personality disorder or ASPD tends to be that not everyone with antisocial personality disorder or ASPD wants help or believes that there is a problem. That said, if someone does, counseling or therapy can be very beneficial.

### **What Are The Traits Of A Sociopath?**

What are considered sociopathic traits or sociopathic traits? Here are some of the potential signs and traits of a person with antisocial personality disorder:

- A lack of empathy for others
- Little to no genuine remorse
- The manipulation of other people
- Lying and deceit
- A sense of superiority over others
- Little to no regard for right or wrong
- The belief that rules do not apply to them
- Getting into legal trouble or a little regard for the law
- A lack of responsibility or engaging in irresponsible behaviors
- Aggression or hostility
- The exploitation of other people
- Substance use

People with antisocial personality disorder are not monsters, and despite the name of the disorder, it doesn't mean that someone is antisocial in the way that we typically understand the term. For a person to be diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder, they must meet the DSM criteria for the disorder.

## DSM-5 Criteria For ASPD

The DSM-5 is the most recent version of the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental health disorders.

The DSM-5 states that ASPD is characterized by *“a pervasive pattern of disregard for and violation of the rights of others, since age 15 years, as indicated by three (or more) of the following:*

- *Failure to conform to social norms concerning lawful behaviors, such as performing acts that are grounds for arrest.*
- *Deceitfulness, repeated lying, use of aliases, or conning others for pleasure or personal profit.*
- *Impulsivity or failure to plan.*
- *Irritability and aggressiveness, often with physical fights or assaults.*
- *Reckless disregard for the safety of self or others.*
- *Consistent irresponsibility, failure to sustain consistent work behavior or honor monetary obligations.*
- *Lack of remorse, being indifferent to or rationalizing having hurt, mistreated, or stolen from another person.”*

Though someone must be 18 or older to be diagnosed with ASPD, some signs can be seen in children that may predict the condition, one of the most common being harm to animals or a diagnosis of conduct disorder. The diagnosis shares traits with other conditions, including other cluster B personality disorders, which is part of why seeing a mental health professional for a diagnosis is so important. To receive a diagnosis of any mental health disorder, you must go to a provider who is licensed and able to diagnose mental health disorders. Often, this will be a psychiatrist.

## What Are Cluster B Personality Disorders?

Antisocial personality disorder is categorized as a cluster B personality disorder. Cluster B personality disorders are characterized by impulsive behavior and unpredictable or volatile emotions. Disorders that are considered cluster B personality disorders include antisocial personality disorder, histrionic

personality disorder, narcissistic personality disorder, and borderline personality disorder.

The other clusters of personality disorders include cluster A personality disorders and C personality disorders. Cluster A personality disorders are characterized by unusual, eccentric thoughts and behaviors. Cluster A personality disorders include schizoid personality disorder, paranoid personality disorder, and schizotypal personality disorder. Cluster C personality disorders are characterized by anxious and fearful thoughts and behaviors. The cluster C personality disorders that are recognized in the DSM include OCPD or obsessive-compulsive personality disorder, avoidant personality disorder, and dependent personality disorder.

### **Facts And Statistics About Antisocial Personality Disorder**



Here are some interesting facts and statistics about antisocial personality disorder or ASPD that you may not know.

- One study (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20445838/>) on incarcerated offenders of the law found that 35.3% of those surveyed had antisocial personality disorder or ASPD. Although the disorder is technically diagnosed in men more frequently than it is in women, there was no disparity in gender found in this study.
- Although someone with antisocial personality disorder can be violent, not everyone with ASPD is dangerous or violent. This is one of the many common misconceptions about antisocial personality disorder.
- The term sociopath was popularized in the year 1930 by an American psychologist named George Everett Partridge.
- Psychopathy and sociopathy are both diagnosed under antisocial personality disorder or ASPD.
- It is said that sociopathy and psychopathy are more common (<https://www.sakkyndig.com/psychologi/artvit/babiak2010.pdf>) in those who fill leadership roles than it is in the general population.

### **Can A Sociopath Change?**

Sociopaths can change, but again, the key here is that someone has to be both aware of their condition and want to change their behaviors. Some people with antisocial personality disorder may get mandated to therapy by the court, and this is the only way that some people with the condition receive mental health treatment. Hospitalization for antisocial personality disorder may occur in some cases, though it is not particularly common. If hospitalization does occur, it might be due to one's reckless behavior. One of the difficulties with antisocial personality disorder is that since someone with this disorder can lie and be highly manipulative, they may be able to manipulate a mental health professional, meaning that the condition might not be picked up on by said professional. That said, if someone with the condition wants to change or manage the condition, which they absolutely can, it is possible. The most often used form of treatment for antisocial personality disorder is therapy or counseling, often in the form of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) or mentalization-based therapy (MBT). For all guidance regarding specific

treatments, please consult a medical or mental health professional.

It is common for someone with an antisocial personality disorder or ASPD to have an additional comorbid mental health condition or co-occurring mental health condition. For example, someone might have antisocial personality disorder, and they may also suffer from substance use disorder (SUD) or major depression, too. Substance use disorder in various forms, major depression, and anxiety are all common comorbidities with this condition. If someone has a co-occurring mental health concern, it will often be addressed in therapy or counseling. In the case that someone struggles with substance use, that may be what is treated first, in addition to other immediately dangerous or extreme behaviors.

### **Is My Spouse A Sociopath?**

Some people wonder, “Is my spouse a sociopath? If so, how would I know?” If you notice the signs of antisocial personality disorder in your spouse and they are impacting your relationship, it is likely that there is a problem regardless of if they are diagnosed with the condition or not. For example, if your spouse is manipulative, violent, impulsive in a way that is harmful to themselves, their work, or other people, and so on, it is likely that this is causing difficulties in your partnership. You can’t diagnose your spouse, but you can identify things that are affecting your ability to have a healthy and happy relationship. Once you do, you will learn how to either navigate the situation, or you might make the decision to leave. This is yet another circumstance where counseling can help. To find a therapist or counselor near you, you may search the web, ask your doctor for a referral, contact your insurance company and see what they offer, or seek counseling through an online therapy website.

### **Could I Be A Sociopath? Take The Mind Diagnostics Sociopath Test**





Are you wondering if you could have ASPD or sociopath symptoms? Although the Mind Diagnostics sociopath test can never replace a diagnosis and should not be used in place of a diagnosis, it might be able to give you some insight into your symptoms and what you could be going through. Your results of the Mind Diagnostics sociopathy test will be fully confidential. The test is free and quick to take.

Click here (<https://www.mind-diagnostics.org/sociopath-test>) to take the mind diagnostics sociopath test.

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