

# Histrionic Personality Disorder: When Performance Finds Purpose

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## The Challenge, the Shadow, and God's Redemption

Histrionic Personality Disorder (HPD; American Psychiatric Association, 2022) is often misunderstood as mere attention-seeking behavior, yet beneath the drama lies a sincere longing to be seen and valued. People with HPD possess a remarkable capacity for emotion and expression — traits that can either consume them or inspire others when redeemed.

Their need to be noticed often develops from feeling invisible in their formative years. Performance becomes a way to earn love and affirmation. But in Christ, attention is no longer a currency to be earned; it becomes an opportunity to reflect His light rather than demand our own.

When secure in God's love, those who once performed for approval can become some of the most joyful encouragers and worshipers — bringing life and color where there was once emptiness.

## Clinical Definition and Criteria

According to the DSM-5-TR, Histrionic Personality Disorder is a pervasive pattern of excessive emotionality and attention-seeking, beginning by early adulthood and present in various contexts. Five or more of the following are required: (American Psychiatric Association, 2022)

- Feels uncomfortable when not the center of attention.
- Interactions are often inappropriately sexual or provocative.
- Displays rapidly shifting and shallow emotions.
- Consistently uses physical appearance to draw attention.
- Speech is impressionistic and lacking in detail.
- Shows dramatic or exaggerated emotions.
- Is easily influenced by others or circumstances.
- Sees relationships as more intimate than they really are.

These criteria describe the outward manifestations of an inner search for identity, security, and purpose.

## Faith & Encouragement

People with HPD often carry a deep longing to be seen and affirmed. Their emotional energy can fill a room — a gift when anchored in truth. Christ's love meets the need for attention with belonging, transforming performance into purpose.

"I have called you by name; you are Mine." — Isaiah 43:1

In the presence of God, we no longer need to compete for the spotlight; we become reflections of His glory. Faith restores authenticity — a heart of worship instead of a stage for approval.

*Dr. Cindy H. Carr, D.Min., MACL*

## Criterion Reflections

- Needs to be the center of attention

Shadow: Fear of being invisible or forgotten.

Redemptive Side: When secure in God's love, attention shifts from self to service.

Let your light shine before others... — Matthew 5:16

- Inappropriately sexual or provocative behavior

Shadow: Using appearance to gain worth reveals inner emptiness.

Redemptive Side: Modesty and authenticity become the true beauty of a renewed heart.

Your beauty should come from the inner self... — 1 Peter 3:4

- Rapidly shifting emotions

Shadow: Emotional instability creates confusion and fatigue.

Redemptive Side: When guided by the Spirit, emotion becomes empathy and joy.

The fruit of the Spirit is self-control. — Galatians 5:22-23

- Uses appearance to draw attention

Shadow: Self-presentation becomes a mask for loneliness.

Redemptive Side: Presentation turns to purpose — creativity to honor God rather than self.

Whatever you do, do it for the glory of God. — 1 Corinthians 10:31

- Speech is impressionistic, lacking detail

Shadow: Superficiality avoids depth and truth.

Redemptive Side: Honesty and clarity replace drama with wisdom.

Let your yes be yes and your no be no. — Matthew 5:37

- Easily influenced by others

Shadow: Dependency and approval-seeking lead to poor choices.

Redemptive Side: Rooted in Christ, discernment replaces impressionability.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world... — Romans 12:2

## Therapeutic and Community Applications

- Cognitive-Behavioral and Interpersonal Therapies help identify the motives behind attention-seeking and teach authentic self-expression.

- Faith Communities can channel creativity into ministry, encouragement, and service.
- Creative Arts Ministry gives safe outlets for emotional expression — turning performance into praise.
- Mentorship and Accountability help transform emotional energy into purposeful leadership.

“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.” — Psalm 147:3

### **When to Seek Medical or Psychiatric Support**

If depression, anxiety, or impulsivity cause functional impairment, medication for mood stabilization or anxiety reduction may help. Medical care should always be combined with therapy and pastoral guidance to promote balance and growth.

### **Closing Reflection**

Histrionic Personality Disorder reminds us that the desire to be seen is not sin — it is a sign we were created for relationship. When healed, that desire no longer demands a stage but finds its place in serving others and glorifying God. The once unrestrained performer becomes a joyful witness of grace.

“God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” — James 4:6

### **Closing Prayer**

Lord, teach us to seek Your attention above the world's. Transform our need to be seen into a desire to reflect Your light. Let our joyful hearts draw others not to us but to You. Amen.

### **References**

American Psychiatric Association. (2022). \*Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders\* (5th ed., text rev.). American Psychiatric Publishing.