

Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD)

Definition: Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD) is defined as a preoccupation with an imagined or trivial defect in appearance that causes significant distress in social, occupational or other areas of functioning. There is evidence that now shows a relationship between BDD and Obsessive-Compulsive disorders where repeated behaviors or mental acts, such as repeatedly combing one's hair to hide a perceived scalp defect or spending hours applying and reapplying make-up to hide pimples, is the response to preoccupation with perceived defects or flaws in physical appearance. Muscle dysmorphia is also now included with BDD which reflects a preoccupation with becoming more muscular.

Symptoms: Body Dysmorphic Disorder involves excessive worry about imagined or slight imperfections in appearance that are not noticeable to others, is time-consuming (i.e., consumes multiple hours each day), causes distress, anxiety, or shame, gets in the way of daily life (work, school, spending time with friends/family), may also include costly visits to specialists (plastic surgeons, dermatologists) in order to fix the perceived flaws which only makes BDD worse.

Examples of compulsive or repetitive behavior that BDD sufferers may perform in order to hide or improve their flaws:

- Camouflaging by using body position, hats, make-up, clothing, hair
- Comparing body part to other's appearance
- Seeking surgery
- Checking in a mirror
- Avoiding mirrors
- Picking at skin
- Excessive grooming
- Excessive exercise
- Changing clothes excessively

Causes: The causes of Body Dysmorphic Disorder are unclear, but certain biological and environmental factors may contribute to its development including genetic predisposition, neurobiological factors such as the malfunction of serotonin in the brain, personality traits, and life experiences.

Treatment: Treatment should be tailored to the individual but is most effective when using a combination of Cognitive-Behavioral therapy and antidepressant medication.

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