Body Dysmorphic Disorder

An Overview

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Body dysmorphic disorder defined

Body dysmorphic disorder, also known as BDD, is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as a pathological preoccupation with an imagined or slight physical defect of one’s body to the point of causing significant stress or behavioral impairment in several areas (as work and personal relationships).
Patients with BDD exaggerate small flaws or imagine flaws to the point of perceived deformity.
Causes of body dysmorphic disorder

- There are no known causes of body dysmorphic disorder.
- It is believed that there are three main components to the development of BDD:
  - Cultural
  - Social
  - Psychological
- Some believe an event may trigger the manifestation of BDD.

(Hunt, Thienhaus, & Ellwood, 2008)
BDD generally presents in adolescence (Brewster, 2011; Grant & Odlaug, 2009) and affects both men and women (Grant & Odlaug, 2009).

The focus of BDD can be any body part or perceived physical defect, but is most commonly on the head or face (Brewster, 2011; Grant & Odlaug, 2009).
Gender Predominance of specific symptoms

(Hunt et al., 2008)

Men

- Body part focus
  - Body build
  - Genitalia
  - Thinning hair
- Behavior
  - Substance use disorder
  - Weight lifting

Women

- Body part focus
  - Breasts
  - Buttocks
  - Excessive hair
  - Nose
  - Skin
  - Stomach
  - Teeth
  - Thighs
  - Weight
- Behavior
  - Camouflaging techniques (baggy clothes, wigs, makeup, etc.)
  - Eating disorder
  - Skin picking
Symptoms and/or signs of body dysmorphic disorder

(Brewster, 2011)

- Spending excessive (2-8 hrs.) in front of the mirror
- Body rocking
- Skin picking
- Lack of sleep
- Inability to focus
- Decreased appetite
- Lack of empathy
- Lethargy
- Self-assurance seeking
- Social withdrawal
- Aggressive outbursts
- Suicidal tendencies
Many patients with BDD also have other psychiatric disorders.

- 84% Depression  
  (Grant & Odlaug, 2009)
- 49% Substance-use disorders  
  (Grant & Odlaug, 2009)
- 40% Social phobia  
  (Grant & Odlaug, 2009)
- 33% Obsessive-compulsive disorder  
  (Grant & Odlaug, 2009)
- Avoidant personality disorders  
  (Grant & Odlaug, 2009)
- Paranoid personality disorders  
  (Grant & Odlaug, 2009)
- Suicidal tendencies  
  (Jaffe, 2006)
Physical effects of body dysmorphic disorder

- Obsessive skin picking
  - Infection
  - Skin grafts
  (Grant & Oldaug, 2009)
- Eating disorders
  - Anorexia nervosa
  - Bulimia nervosa
  (News RX, 2006)
- Cosmetic surgery
  - Habit forming
  - Unnecessary
  (Nugent, 2009)
Social effects of body dysmorphic disorder

- Feeling isolated, depressed, alone and unwanted (Jaffe, 2006)
- Feelings of shame, guilt, and embarrassment (Brewster, 2011)
- Trouble engaging and interacting with peers (Brewster, 2011)
- Trouble developing and maintaining friendships and relationships (Brewster, 2011)
- Avoid school, work, or other social situations (Hunt et al., 2008)
- Perform poorly at school or work and excessive lateness (Hunt et al., 2008)
- Fear of bodily persecution (Brewster, 2011)
Treatments of body dysmorphic disorder

- Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)  
  (Brewster, 2011; Hunt et al., 2008)
- Cognitive behavioral therapy  
  (Curran, 2006)
- A combination of SSRIs and cognitive behavioral therapy  
  (Brewster, 2011; Hunt et al., 2008)

Many people with BDD don’t admit anything is wrong. The disorder often goes unrecognized (Brewster, 2011). It is commonly misdiagnosed in most medical settings (Hunt et al., 2008).
References


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