

MONTHLY MEMO:

Mental Health Disparities Affecting Women



OVERVIEW

Women face significant mental health disparities, meaning illnesses and disorders women tend to be predisposed to. This month, WRHO is highlighting a few of these: Seasonal Affective Disorder, Depression and Anxiety, and ADHD vs. Borderline Personality.

Seasonal Affective Disorder

- Occurs during the late fall and winter and is typically absent during the spring and summer.
- More common especially within women and young people. 4 out of 5 people experiencing SAD are women.
- Some common symptoms include sadness, low-energy, difficulty sleeping or over-sleeping, weight gain, or loss of interest.
- Researchers have also found a link between an imbalance of serotonin and a lack of vitamin D.

Seasonal Affective Disorder

- Pattern is prevalent
- No desire to leave the home
- Withdrawing from life on a global scale
- People usually feel better in the spring
- People push SAD aside because they think it's just winter blues, when it is a major depression with seasonal patterns

Winter Blues

- Happens "every now and then" typically in colder months
- Feeling of sadness and wanting to stay home
- Cancel social plans but still take interests and part in daily activities
- No loss of pleasure of life, just occasional sadness.

SEASONAL DEPRESSION

What you need to know about depression



How can you beat holiday depression?



Depression and Anxiety

- The prevalence of major depression is higher in women, in 2010, its global annual prevalence was 5.5%, respectively, representing a 1.7-fold greater incidence in women.
- Women are nearly twice as likely as men to be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder in their lifetime. In the past year, the prevalence of any anxiety disorder was higher for females (23.4%) than for males (14.3%).
- The triggers for depression appear to differ, with women more often presenting with internalizing symptoms and men presenting with externalizing symptoms.

Depression-Related Disorders Specific to Women

Women also experience specific forms of depression-related illness, including:

- Premenstrual dysphoric disorder
- Postpartum depression
- Postmenopausal depression and anxiety

All of which are associated with changes in ovarian hormones and could contribute to the increased prevalence in women.

ADHD and Borderline Personality Disorder

ADHD and Borderline Personality Disorder have overlapping symptoms and often clash with one another in terms of diagnosis.

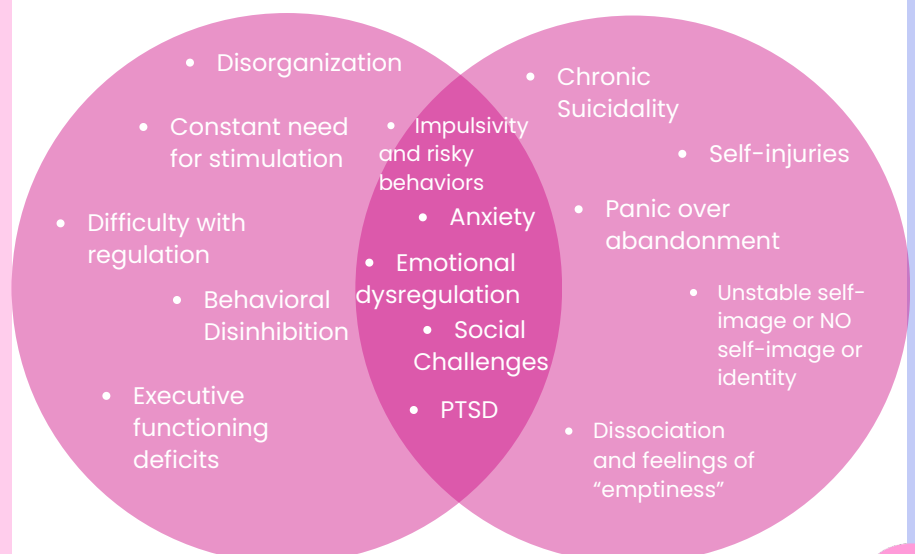
- Recent studies indicate 14% women show positive for ADHD testing compared to men (12%).
- 75% of Borderline diagnoses are women, this does not mean that 75% of women have BPD, but that of those suffering, women take the majority.

While both have differing symptoms, there are major traits that manifest as strikingly similar behavior in both diagnoses.

- Impulsivity and risky behavior
- PTSD
- Emotional dysregulation (highs and lows)
- Challenges in social relationships
- Data has also found very little differences in irritability levels as well as depression and anxiety episodes.

This can mean that in cases of misdiagnosis, patients may not get the treatment they need, and may suffer as a result. For instance, a patient who is misdiagnosed with BPD might be prescribed an SSRI, and react negatively, where if they are correctly diagnosed with ADHD, an SNRI might have a better effect.

ADHD vs BPD



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SOURCES

Seasonal Affective Disorder:

[Medline Plus](#)

[Mental Health America](#)

[Shoreline Community College](#)

Depression and Anxiety:

[University of Cambridge](#)

[National Library of Medicine](#)

[Anxiety and Depression Association of America](#)

[Texas Health Organization](#)

ADHD and BPD:

[Patient First-Hand Experience](#)

[England National Health Society](#)

[BPD Statistics](#)

[National Library of Medicine](#)