What is the disability?

Personality disorders (PD) are conditions that affect how people think, feel and behave. Their behavior and beliefs can be difficult for others to comprehend.

- PD’s usually become noticeable in adolescence or early adulthood but can develop in childhood.

Facts:

- At any given time in the UK 1 in 20 people will have a personality disorder.
- A few examples of personality disorders:
  - Obsessive compulsive PD: found in around 2% of people
  - Schizoid PD
  - Avoidant PD
  - Paranoid PD
  - Borderline PD
  - Antisocial PD: found in less than 1% of people
- Most people who are diagnosed do not fit any one category fully.

Where can I find out more?

- www.mind.org.uk
- www.mentalhealth.org.uk

Where to get help in College?

If you have this diagnosis or have experienced the symptoms described above for a while you can get advice and support from:

- Community, Wellbeing and Student Outreach by emailing welfare@rhul.ac.uk.
- The University counselling service in FW 171, call in or email counselling@rhul.ac.uk to arrange an appointment.
- The Disability and Dyslexia Service in FW 149 and 143, call in or email disability-dyslexia@rhul.ac.uk to arrange an appointment.
- The Clarence Medical Centre in FE, call their reception on 01784 443131 or call in to book an appointment.

Please note these services are open between 9:00am – 5:00pm Monday-Friday during term time.

Useful numbers:

- Royal Holloway Security: 01784 443063
- NHS: 111
- Out of Hours medical care: 01753 865773
- Samaritans: 08457 909090
- Surrey Police (non-emergency): 101

The information and quotes in this flyer are from mind.org.uk and www.rcpsych.ac.uk.
Symptoms
Defining personality is difficult, it is someone’s thoughts, feelings and behaviours, which are all affected by our environment. As individuals, our personalities develop and mature over time as we are usually flexible enough to learn from past experiences. An individual with a personality disorder (PD) finds it more difficult to learn from these experiences. This is because it is difficult to change their pattern of thinking, feeling and behaving.

This affects their relationship with themselves and others:

- Their thoughts or behaviours may seem odd to others.
- They can become overwhelmed by feelings of anxiety, worthlessness or anger.
- Sometimes they feel empty and avoid people as they feel disconnected.
- They have difficulty retaining close relationships.
- They can sometimes lose touch with reality (May have hallucinations).
- They can become isolated and find it difficult to ask for help.

“I always felt different from others and had no sense of belonging anywhere. My life was always chaotic, as were my feelings – never consistent or stable, but changeable and unpredictable. I felt like an outcast of society – undeserving of anything. I secretly longed for a better way of life, but didn’t know how to achieve it and lacked confidence that I could change.”

Mind.org.uk

Effects on life as a student:

- Difficulty maintaining relationships, which can lead to isolation.
- Attendance can be affected by extreme lows.
- These students are more likely to abuse alcohol and drugs.
- The medication used to treat these conditions can cause fatigue or irritability.

Top tips:

1. Where appropriate try to provide lecture materials in advance, allow students to record lectures, and allow these students extra time to respond to oral questions.
2. Emphasise the positive. This diagnosis does not mean their whole personality is negative or bad.
3. They may need encouragement to change a negative behaviour, for example drugs and alcohol exacerbate the problem.
4. Avoid reinforcing the idea that they are “inadequate”, “being immature” or “attention seeking”.
5. Stress can often trigger negative reactions, try to avoid stressful situations as far as this is possible.
6. Try to remember that their mood can swing very quickly, it may have nothing to do with you or the situation.
7. Try to understand that they may experience emotional reactions to situations more intensely and for a longer time period than other students. Try to minimise changes to rooms, exam dates etc.
8. Encourage these students to use calendars or apps to help with time management and impulsiveness.
9. Discuss and plan support for these students for group work.
10. Maintain boundaries, acknowledge the different responsibilities of students and staff and inform the student of certain consequences.