

Psychopath Criteria

DSM-5 does not include a specific diagnosis for "psychopathy." Instead, the concept of psychopathy is often considered in relation to antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) and certain traits of conduct disorder in children and adolescents.

Below are the DSM-5 criteria for antisocial personality disorder and conduct disorder, which are often referenced in discussions about psychopathy.

Conduct Disorder Diagnostic Criteria

A. A repetitive and persistent pattern of behavior in which the basic rights of others or major age-appropriate societal norms or rules are violated, as manifested by the presence of at least three of the following criteria in the past 12 months, with at least one criterion present in the past 6 months:

1. Aggression to People and Animals

- a. Often bullies, threatens, or intimidates others.
- b. Often initiates physical fights.
- c. Has used a weapon that can cause serious physical harm to others.
- d. Has been physically cruel to people.
- e. Has been physically cruel to animals.
- f. Has stolen while confronting a victim.
- g. Has forced someone into sexual activity.

2. Destruction of Property

- a. Has deliberately engaged in fire setting with the intention of causing serious damage.
- b. Has deliberately destroyed others' property.

3. Deceitfulness or Theft

- a. Has broken into someone else's house, building, or car.
- b. Often lies to obtain goods or favors or to avoid obligations.
- c. Has stolen items of nontrivial value without confronting a victim.

4. Serious Violations of Rules

- a. Often stays out at night despite parental prohibitions, beginning before age 13 years.
- b. Has run away from home overnight at least twice while living in the parental or parental surrogate home.
- c. Is often truant from school, beginning before age 13 years.

B. The disturbance in behavior causes clinically significant impairment in social, academic, or occupational functioning.

C. If the individual is age 18 years or older, criteria are not met for Antisocial Personality Disorder.

Specifiers

Onset:

- Childhood-onset type: Individuals show at least 1 symptom characteristic of conduct disorder prior to age 10 years.
- Adolescent-onset type: Individuals show no symptom characteristic of conduct disorder prior to age 10 years.
- Unspecified onset: Criteria for a diagnosis of conduct disorder are met, but there is not enough information available to determine whether the onset of the first symptom was before or after age 10 years.

Severity:

- Mild: Few if any conduct problems in excess of those required to make the diagnosis are present, and conduct problems cause only minor harm to others.
- Moderate: The number of conduct problems and the effect on others are intermediate between "mild" and "severe."
- Severe: Many conduct problems in excess of those required to make the diagnosis are present, or conduct problems cause considerable harm to others.

With limited prosocial emotions:

To qualify for this specifier, an individual must have displayed at least 2 of the following characteristics persistently over at least 12 months and in multiple relationships and settings. These characteristics reflect the individual's typical pattern of interpersonal and emotional functioning over this period and not just occasional occurrences in some situations.

- Lack of remorse or guilt: Does not feel bad or guilty when he or she does some thing wrong (exclude remorse when expressed only when caught and/or facing punishment). The individual shows a general lack of concern about the negative consequences of his or her actions. For example, the individual is not remorseful after hurting someone or does not care about the consequences of breaking rules.
- Callous—lack of empathy: Disregards and is unconcerned about the feelings of others. The individual is described as cold and uncaring. The person appears more concerned about the effects of his or her actions on himself or herself, rather than their effects on others, even when they result in substantial harm to others.
- Unconcerned about performance: Does not show concern about poor/problematic performance at school, at work, or in other important activities. The individual does not put forth the effort necessary to perform well, even when expectations are clear, and typically blames others for his or her poor performance.
- Shallow or deficient affect: Does not express feelings or show emotions to others, except in ways that seem shallow, insincere, or superficial (e.g. - actions contradict the emotion displayed; can turn emotions "on" or "off" quickly) or when emotional expressions are used for gain (e.g. emotions to manipulate or intimidate others).

To assess the criteria for the specifier, multiple information sources are necessary. In addition to the individual's self-report, it is necessary to consider reports by others who have known the individual for extended periods of time (e.g., parents, teachers, co-workers, extended family members, peers).

Antisocial Personality Disorder Diagnostic Criteria

A. A pervasive pattern of disregard for and violation of the rights of others, occurring since age 15 years, as indicated by 3 (or more) of the following:

1. Failure to conform to social norms with respect to lawful behaviors
2. Deceitfulness
3. Impulsivity or failure to plan ahead
4. Irritability and aggressiveness
5. Reckless disregard for the safety of self or others
6. Consistent irresponsibility
7. Lack of remorse

B. The individual is at least age 18 years.

C. There is evidence of conduct disorder with onset before age 15 years.

D. The occurrence of antisocial behavior is not exclusively during the course of schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.

Additional Information

Please note that while the DSM-5 criteria for antisocial personality disorder and conduct disorder can be used to assess certain traits associated with psychopathy, they do not encompass the full range of characteristics often attributed to psychopathy in the clinical and research literature.

For a more comprehensive assessment of psychopathy, tools such as the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R) are commonly used.

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This handout is not a tool for self-diagnosis. If you suspect you or someone you know may have a psychopathological disorder, please contact a qualified mental health professional for a proper diagnosis and treatment plan.