

## Condition:



# Antisocial Personality Disorder

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## What is Antisocial Personality Disorder?

Antisocial personality Disorder (ASPD) is a behavioural and personal type that is characterised by reckless, aggressive, irresponsible and often criminal behaviour.

If you have Antisocial Personality Disorder you may have grown up in difficult family circumstances potentially experiencing harsh parental care including domestic or child abuse. One or both of your parents may have misused alcohol and/or drugs. Emergency and social services may have become involved with your family.

# Antisocial Personality Disorder and Work

You may have undiagnosed ASPD if you have found it difficult in the past to hold down a job for any length of time. Or if you have put yourself in dangerous or risky situations at work, often without considering the consequences for yourself or other people. You may have behaved dangerously or even illegally at work. Your behaviour may have been offensive or unpleasant for other people.

You may have a criminal record, or may have been expelled from school, which makes finding a job more difficult and therefore you could require extra support to overcome these barriers. If you feel that these issues have affected you in the past and could potentially derail your chances of finding and keeping work, speak to your GP or others for support.

Some workplace adjustments might include :

- Changing your working hours to avoid busy times
- Flexible working (e.g. altering start/finish times, particularly during acute episodes; working from home where appropriate and possible, part time working, job sharing)
- Changing tasks or the pace of work to avoid exacerbating the condition
- Allowing for reasonable time off for appointments and treatment
- More frequent and/or longer breaks
- Providing a quiet place to rest without being disturbed

## What does having an Antisocial Personality Disorder feel like?

One or more of the following may be a feature in your life history.

Putting yourself in dangerous or risky situations, often without considering the consequences for yourself or for other people.

Behaving dangerously and sometimes illegally or in a way that is unpleasant for others.

Feeling bored very easily and acting on impulse.

Finding it difficult to hold down a job for long.

Getting into fights easily.

Having a criminal record.

Repeatedly breaking the law.

Being expelled from school or college for impulsive, reckless or violent conduct.

Feeling no sense of guilt if you have mistreated others.

## What causes Antisocial Personality Disorder?

The specific cause of antisocial personality disorder is unknown. The likelihood of ASPD is known to be higher if a variety of social factors are present:

- poor education
- ill health
- poverty and child development
- family problems during childhood in particular

With some people there may be a genetic cause i.e. it is passed down through the family.

## Talking to Your GP or Health Professional

Antisocial Personality Disorder can only be diagnosed by a mental health professional. It is difficult to identify as the individual does not always perceive that there is any problem and their behaviour is often rationalised.

The most effective means of diagnosis is spending time with a professional psychotherapist or counsellor who will be able to identify whether an individual has evolved an anti-social personality. The above symptoms will be persistent and chronic and a professional will be able to identify them although this may take some time.

Speak to your GP in the first instance.

## Treatments

Antisocial Personality Disorder is one of the most difficult types of personality disorders to treat. However evidence suggests that behaviour can improve over time with psychotherapy, even if core characteristics such as a lack of empathy remain.

A person with Antisocial Personality Disorder may also be reluctant to seek treatment and may only start therapy when ordered to do so by a court.

A class of antidepressant called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) may improve anger and general personality disorder symptoms. Carbamazepine and lithium may help control symptoms such as aggression and impulsive behaviour. These would be prescribed usually after a psychiatric referral however.

## Self-Management

As stated, those with Antisocial Personality Disorder are generally reluctant to see themselves as needing to alter their behaviour. However, when a person does become aware of the need for change, they can benefit from a number of self-management strategies.



### Take notice

Breathing techniques and meditation can be explored to help manage aggressive tendencies and allow space and time for rational reflection on the choices that are available in the moment.

The following technique may help you to cope immediately with a stressful situation until you have time for further relaxation:

1. Acknowledge you are feeling stressed and recognise the feelings.
2. Say 'STOP!' to yourself sharply (aloud if the situation permits) - this means stop fussing and getting so worked up.
3. Breathe in and hold your breath for a moment. Generally you shouldn't pause between breathing in and out but in this sort of emergency it may help – do not hold your breath for more than two or three seconds.
4. Breathe out slowly and as you do so, relax your shoulders and hands
5. Pause for a moment and then breathe in again

6. As you breathe out slowly this time, relax your forehead, face and jaw
7. Stay quiet for a few seconds, then go on with whatever you were doing but move smoothly and slowly
8. If you have to talk, speak a little more slowly and with your voice a little lower than usual.



### Be active

Regular physical activity can help as it lowers rates of anxiety and deals with negative emotions such as anger. It doesn't need to be intense; it can be things like walking. Even if that is 10 minutes in your lunch break.



### Keep Learning

Continued learning through life enhances self-esteem and encourages social interaction and a more active life.



## Give Back

Taking part in social and community life can help keep you distracted and in engaged into different areas. This may be challenging for you but the benefits will be worth it.

## Useful links

