

Histrionic Personality Disorder (HPD)

When the Need for Attention
Drives the Urge to Self-Medicate



What is Histrionic Personality Disorder?

Histrionic Personality Disorder is a mental health condition marked by persistent patterns of excessive attention-seeking and exaggerated emotional displays. People with HPD often feel uncomfortable when they aren't the center of attention and may use dramatic behavior, seduction, or emotional outbursts to draw focus to themselves.

What Does it Look Like?

- **Excessive Need for Attention**
They become visibly uncomfortable or distressed when not the focus of a conversation or gathering.
- **Dramatic Emotional Displays**
Emotions shift rapidly and seem exaggerated or theatrical, leaving you unsure what's genuine.
- **Inappropriately Seductive Behavior**
They use physical appearance or flirtation to draw attention, even in inappropriate settings.
- **Shallow Relationships**
They consider relationships more intimate than they are, calling acquaintances "close friends."

How Does HPD Contribute to Relapse?

For someone with HPD, emptiness sets in when attention fades. Substances become a way to fill the void or fuel the performance they feel compelled to maintain.

- 1) **Emotional Emptiness Drives Use**
When the spotlight shifts away, substances become the fastest escape from feelings of worthlessness.
- 2) **Treatment Requires Honest Self-Reflection**
Recovery demands looking inward, but HPD creates a focus on external validation instead.
- 3) **Without Treating HPD, the Pattern Continues**
They leave treatment still chasing attention, still unable to tolerate the discomfort of being ordinary.

Prevalence:

1.8% of U.S. adults¹

Co-Occurrence:

29% develop a substance use disorder in their lifetime²

Relapse Risk:

Significant

Highly elevated risk of early treatment dropout³

Sources: ¹ Grant et al., *Prevalence, Correlates, and Disability of Personality Disorders in the United States: Results from the NESARC (2004)*, *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*. ² NESARC data on Cluster B personality disorders and alcohol use, *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*. ³ *Personality Disorders and Retention in Therapeutic Community Treatment*, PMC

Long-Term Treatment for HPD and Addiction

Individuals with HPD have built an identity around being seen. In short-term programs, they often become the center of attention in group settings while avoiding the difficult internal work that recovery demands. They need extended time to develop a sense of self that doesn't require external validation.

Our **long-term, progress-based model** provides the structure that helps clients with HPD build genuine self-worth over time. Clients must demonstrate real change in **how they relate to themselves and others**.



"Families often describe feeling exhausted by the constant emotional intensity. They've learned to walk on eggshells, always on alert. That dynamic has to change for recovery to take hold."

 **Angie Buja, MA, LPC-S**
Family Program Director, Burning Tree Ranch



Dual Diagnosis Treatment for HPD

When HPD and addiction occur together, treating only one leads to relapse. The need for attention and validation drives substance use, which provides temporary relief from the emptiness HPD creates.

- **Treating Both Conditions Together**
Without addressing the underlying need for external validation, the desire for substances remains.
- **Developing Internal Self-Worth**
Recovery requires building an identity that doesn't depend on being the center of attention.
- **Providing Enough Time**
Changing lifelong patterns of relating to others requires more than 30 or 90 days. It can take months to change these behaviors.

Dual Diagnosis:

The presence of **both a substance use disorder and a mental health condition** occurring together. Effective treatment for dual-diagnosis addictions must address both aspects simultaneously.



Have Other Treatment Programs Missed the Deeper Issues?

Burning Tree Ranch is the Nation's only authentic long-term treatment program for chronic relapse. Call us at (866) 287-2877 or visit us online at www.BurningTree.com.

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