



# Paranoid Personality Disorder (PPD)

When Constant Suspicion Drives the Urge to Self-Medicate

## What is Paranoid Personality Disorder?

**Paranoid Personality Disorder** is a mental health condition marked by a persistent pattern of distrust and suspicion of others, even when there's no reason to be suspicious. People with PPD interpret innocent words and actions as hidden threats or betrayals, making it nearly impossible to maintain stable relationships build trust.

## What Does it Look Like?

- > **Unwarranted Suspicion**  
They're convinced others are out to deceive, exploit, or harm them, usually without evidence.
- > **Reluctance to Confide**  
Refuses to share personal information others, fearing it will somehow be used against them.
- > **Reading Hidden Meanings**  
An innocent comment or a casual glance becomes proof of something sinister.
- > **Holding Grudges**  
Years-old offenses fuel current hostility, and forgiveness never comes.

## How Does PPD Contribute to Relapse?

For someone with PPD, the world feels constantly threatening. Substances become the easiest way to relax the hypervigilance and suspicion they live with every day.

- 1) **Hypervigilance Creates Unbearable Tension**  
Living in a state of constant threat detection is exhausting. Substances offer relief from the anxiety and mistrust.
- 2) **Professional Treatment Requires Trust**  
Treatment depends on honest relationships with therapists, counselors, and peers—which is difficult for them to build.
- 3) **Without Treating PPD, the Distrust Remains**  
They leave treatment with the same perceived threats, and are still unable to trust the people trying to help them.

### **Prevalence:**

**2.3-4.4%** of U.S. adults<sup>1</sup>

### **Co-Occurrence:**

**40%** develop an alcohol use disorder in their lifetime<sup>2</sup>

### **Relapse Risk:**

**4-5x** more likely to develop SUDs than the general population<sup>3</sup>

*Sources: <sup>1</sup> Grant et al., Prevalence, Correlates, and Disability of Personality Disorders in the United States: Results from the NESARC (2004). Journal of Clinical Psychiatry. <sup>2</sup> Grant et al., Archives of General Psychiatry: NESARC data on Cluster A personality disorders and alcohol use. <sup>3</sup> Co-Occurrence of Personality Disorders and Substance Use Disorders, PMC*

## Treating PPD and Chronic Relapse at Burning Tree Ranch

PPD creates a fundamental barrier to treatment: distrust. Someone who sees hidden agendas in every interaction cannot engage meaningfully with therapists or peers in a 30-day program. They need extended time to slowly build the trust required for real change.

Our **long-term, progress-based model** provides consistent, structured relationship-building that PPD demands. Clients advance through the program when they demonstrate genuine changes in **how they relate to others and manage their suspicions**.



*“The suspicion is a defense mechanism that they’ve developed. Real treatment requires enough time to help someone feel safe enough to question the beliefs that they feel has protected them so far.”*

 Meghan Bohlman, LPC-S, LCDC, EMDR-Trained  
Executive Clinical Director, Burning Tree Ranch



## Dual Diagnosis Treatment for PPD Co-Occurring with Addiction

Without treatment for both conditions, the paranoia and mistrust that drove the substance use remains. The person returns to the same hypervigilant state they were in before treatment.

- **Treating Both Conditions Together**  
Without addressing PPD, the desire for substance use remains.
- **Building Trust Gradually**  
Someone with PPD can't form therapeutic relationships quickly. Time and consistency is required to build the trust needed for change.
- **Providing Enough Time**  
It takes more than 30 days to resolve decades of learned distrust.

### 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](http://www.BurningTree.com).

**Disclaimer:** Burning Tree Ranch aims to enhance the quality of life for individuals battling substance use and mental health disorders through well-researched and professionally reviewed content. Our publications focus on the nature of behavioral health conditions, available treatments, and their outcomes. Reviewed by licensed experts, our material is informative but not a replacement for professional advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the guidance of a licensed health provider for any medical or clinical concerns.