

DSM-IV PERSONALITY CLUSTER C ELEVATION

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CLUSTER

The Personality Types included in Cluster C are ***Avoidant Personality Type***, ***Dependant Personality Type***, and ***Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Type***. These three Personality Types are generally characterized by anxiety- and fear-based behaviors.

An elevation in the Cluster indicates that in all likelihood at least one of the Types is very significantly elevated with at least one of the other Types being marginally elevated. These would be minimum criteria for elevation of the Cluster and the individual Personality Type elevations may be even more prominent.

While elevation of a Cluster does not indicate (necessarily) that the individual has a personality disorder, the elevation does indicate some amount of personality pathology that will disrupt normal human living. This disruption will be both intrapersonal and interpersonal.

All Cluster elevations have a common thread: A fear-based approach to intrapersonal and interpersonal life. This fear base leads to a variety of different reactions personally and socially described in the details below. Emotional disruption will be evident in the form of aversion and rejection of softer emotions (which elevate fear responses). This will mandate that the individual remain emotionally at arms length from everyone, including a spouse.

A Personal Matrix analysis will aid the therapist in determining exactly which areas of an individual's life are most significantly disrupted by intrapersonal and interpersonal issues.

TRIGGERS THAT TYPICALLY PRECIPITATE A FULL PERSONALITY DISORDER

There are multiple "trigger events" that will move a stable Cluster C personality toward a full personality disorder. Trigger events include *demands **for** close personal relationships* (Avoidant Type), *demands **of** close interpersonal relationships* (Obsessive-Compulsive Type), *demands for social appearances* (Avoidant Type), *expectations of self-reliance* (Dependant Type), *confrontation with authority figures* (Obsessive-Compulsive Type), *unstructured situations* (Obsessive-Compulsive Type) and *the prospect of being alone* (Dependant Type).

BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS

Behaviors associated with individuals with Cluster C personality elevations are widely variable. Social withdrawal (Avoidant Type) and non-assertiveness (Dependant Type) are predominant. These individuals may be aloof (Avoidant Type), passive and compliant (Dependant Type). While they are dependable (Obsessive-Compulsive Type), they are also sometimes perfectionistic (Obsessive-Compulsive Type).

INTERPERSONAL BEHAVIORS

Individuals with elevated Cluster C personalities are usually rejection sensitive (Avoidant Type). Thus, they may have a constant need for assurance from others (Dependant Type). In order to prevent rejections, they may be pleasing and self-sacrificing (Dependant Type). Finally, in some cases, they may be unsatisfied with the performance of others (Obsessive-Compulsive Type).

COGNITIVE TRAITS

The cognitive style of Cluster C personality elevations includes heightened perceptions (Avoidant Type), but in some cases these individuals may suffer the opposite characteristic of imperceptiveness (Dependant Type). In short, with an elevation in Cluster C, there is often a cognitive disturbance of perception.

In some cases, these individuals will minimize difficulties (Dependant Type). They often suffer from low self-esteem (Avoidant Type). These individuals usually have a constricted thinking style (Obsessive-Compulsive Type) and often show too much attention to detail (Obsessive-Compulsive Type).

EMOTIONAL BEHAVIORS

The emotional behaviors of individuals with Cluster C personality elevations include lack of deep feelings of intimacy (Obsessive-Compulsive Type). Routinely, these individuals avoid softer emotions and feelings (Obsessive-Compulsive Type) and prefer harder emotions centered around hostility. This is a common thread that occurs in all three Cluster elevations and this hostility focus appears to be a fear-based complex in all three Cluster elevations. This fear-based reaction may be related to the fear of abandonment (Dependant Type).

The logic of this avoidance of softer emotions appears to be that if a person doesn't risk intimacy they can avoid the pain of potential future rejection. This methodology, however, results in insecurity (Dependant Type) and anxiety (Dependant Type). The anxiety and insecurity are generated out of the deep human "understanding" that intimacy is an essential component of human life. Significant feelings of emptiness and loneliness are also usually the result (Avoidant Type).

This leaves the individual with a core emotional state that centers on anger and hostility (Obsessive-Compulsive Type). The hostile emotions may be the result of the knowledge and deep-seated desire to fulfill the human need for intimacy and emotional vulnerability and the revulsion from it that is generated by insecurity and fear. This leaves the individual in a constant emotional state of conflict and tension.

ATTACHMENTS TO OTHERS

As is the case for the other two Cluster elevations, the most primary motivation for attachment to others in Cluster C personality elevations is fear-based. This seems to be based on feelings of unworthiness. Relationships are external in their orientation and the potential for close interpersonal relationships based on emotional vulnerability are not very probable. The prospect of a constructive and emotionally sound marital relationship is dismal since this individual will not typically risk emotional vulnerability.