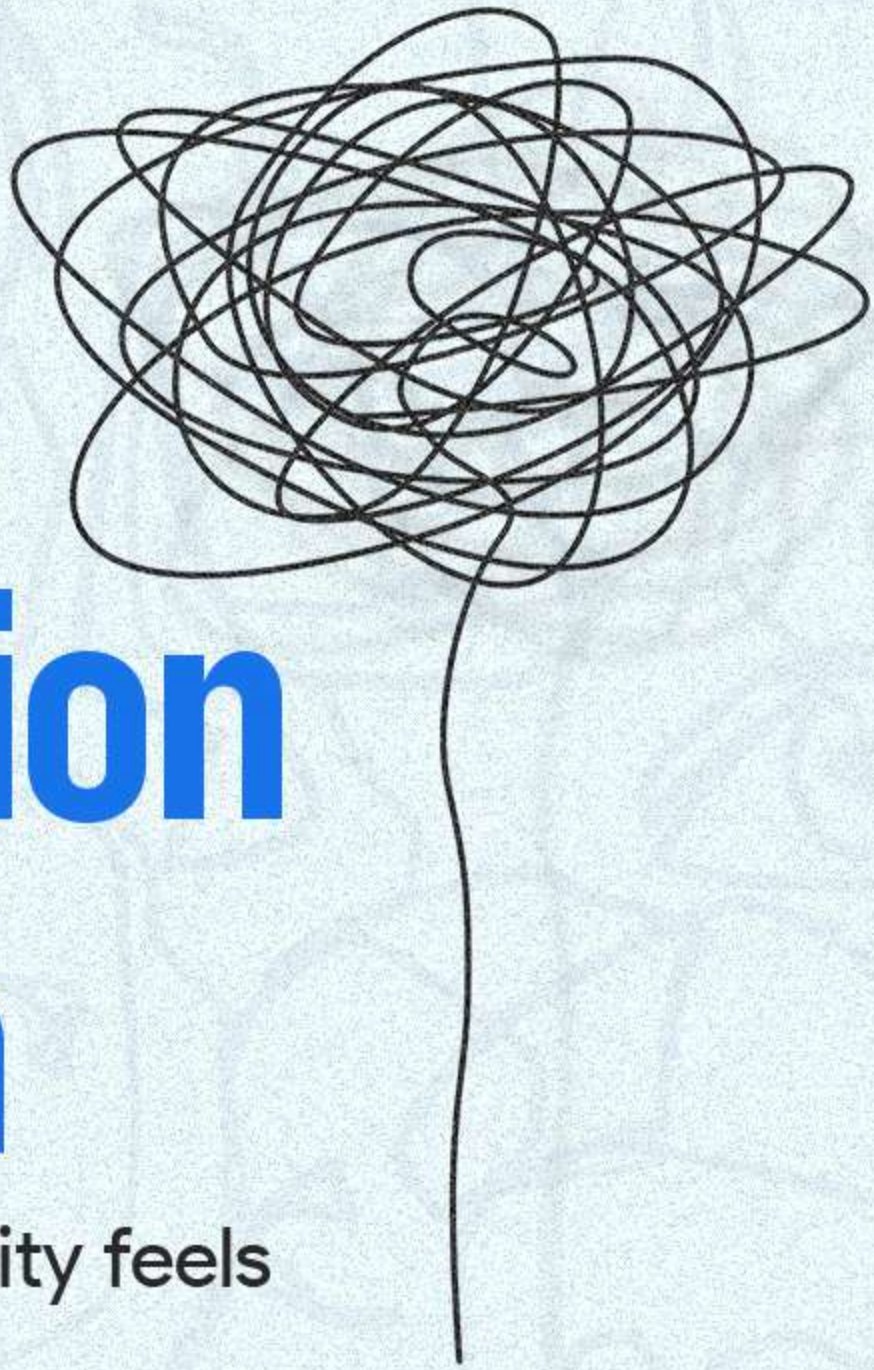
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Dissociation & Trauma

The brain's defence when reality feels too overwhelming.



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What Is Dissociation?

Dissociation is a psychological process where a person becomes disconnected from aspects of:

- Memory
- Identity
- Emotion
- Perception of reality

It's often triggered by trauma, acting as the mind's way to protect itself from overwhelming experiences.



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Common Forms of Dissociation

- **Derealization** – the world feels unreal, foggy, or dreamlike
- **Depersonalization** – you feel unreal, distant, or like you're watching yourself
- **Dissociative amnesia** – memory gaps around distressing events
- **Identity confusion or fragmentation** – often seen in Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID)

These aren't "imagined" — they're real clinical symptoms.



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Depersonalization vs Derealization

Though they often co-occur, they feel different:

- **Depersonalization:**

  “I feel like I’m floating outside my body”

  Self feels altered

- **Derealization:**

  “The world feels distant or fake — like a dream”

  Reality feels distorted

Both are responses to extreme **stress or trauma.**





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Structural Dissociation Theory

Proposed by Van der Hart et al. (2006)

Trauma may cause a division in personality into:

- **Apparently Normal Part (ANP) –** handles daily life
- **Emotional Part (EP) –** holds traumatic memories or intense fear

This “structural dissociation” helps survive, but over time it may lead to symptoms like identity confusion, emotional shutdown, or DID.



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What's Happening in the Brain?

Neuroimaging studies show dissociation involves:

- **Hypoactivation of the prefrontal cortex**
  (disengagement from awareness)
- **Hyperactivation of the amygdala**
  (fear/emotional intensity)
- **Altered Default Mode Network**
  (self-referential thought disturbances)

Your brain is trying to shield you — but at a cost.



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Adaptive → Maladaptive

Dissociation protects you in the moment.

But when it becomes chronic, it can interfere with:

- Memory formation
- Emotional processing
- Relationships
- Sense of self

Dissociation is a survival tool — but sometimes, it keeps you stuck in survival mode.



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You weren't "broken." You were adapting.

Dissociation isn't weakness — it's your mind's way of surviving what felt unbearable.

But survival is not the same as healing.

When you start recognizing the patterns, you start reclaiming yourself.

Save this post — for your studies or your self-understanding.



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