

# Mental Health in the Movies: Split

- Exploring Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) through Split
- Movie: Split (2016)
- Director: M. Night Shyamalan
- Main Character: Kevin Wendell Crumb
- Understanding DID beyond Hollywood

# What is Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID)?

- A condition where someone has two or more distinct identities
- Often develops as a response to severe childhood trauma
- Alters (personalities) can have different ages, genders, and mannerisms
- People with DID experience memory gaps and identity confusion
- It's rare but significantly impacts daily life

# Meet Kevin Wendell Crumb – The Man with Many Faces

- Kevin has 23 known personalities, collectively called 'The Horde'
- Experienced abuse from his mother, which led to his DID
- Some of his key personalities:
  - Barry – The confident and artistic leader
  - Dennis – Controlling, obsessive, and aggressive
  - Patricia – Maternal, manipulative, and calm
  - Hedwig – A playful and naive 9-year-old
  - The Beast – A violent, supernatural alter

# What Symptoms Does Kevin Show?

- Abrupt personality switches – one alter can take control suddenly
- Memory gaps – some identities don't know what others have done
- Completely different mannerisms, voices, and preferences
- Struggles with control – some alters work together, others don't
- Extreme behavior changes – from calm to aggressive in seconds

# DID in Real Life vs. Split

- DID does not cause superhuman abilities like 'The Beast' alter
- Most people with DID are not violent – they are often victims, not perpetrators
- The movie gets some things right:
  - DID is linked to trauma
  - Alters can have different physical abilities (e.g., different handwriting)
- But Hollywood exaggerates the condition for suspense

# Living with DID – The Daily Struggles

- Keeping a job is hard – unexpected personality switches cause problems
- Relationships suffer – loved ones may not understand DID
- Depression & anxiety – common in people with DID
- Therapy is lifelong – managing alters takes time and professional help
- Identity confusion – a constant challenge in daily life

# How is DID Treated?

Psychotherapy is key – talking through trauma helps:

- Trauma-Focused Therapy
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing)
- Medication helps with symptoms – depression, anxiety, and mood stabilization
- Goal is stability, not erasing identities – helping alters work together

# Why Movies Like Split Can Be Harmful

- Creates fear and stigma around mental illness
- People with DID are more likely to be misunderstood and judged
- Exaggerated violence makes DID seem more dangerous than it really is
- Movies should educate, not just entertain



# Final Thoughts – What We Should Learn from Split

- DID is a real and serious disorder, but Hollywood exaggerates it
- People with DID need understanding and support, not fear
- Therapy can help, and people with DID can live stable lives
- The conversation about mental health must be accurate and compassionate

# References

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- American Psychiatric Association (2013).  
Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5).
- Additional peer-reviewed articles on DID and trauma-related disorders.