

See You on the Other Side: A Novel Exploring Dissociative Identity Disorder

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ABSTRACT

Dissociative identity disorder (DID) is a disease in which people experience multiple separate personalities and function independently of one another and autonomously from one another. DID is a rare disease found in only 1.5% of people worldwide, so I want to find out what the cause of people having DID and how they recover from DID. The method that I will use is to create a creative work in the form of a novel. The story will involve family dysfunction and post-traumatic avoidance as the causes of DID and three approaches, which are safety and stability, work on traumatic memories, and re-integration into life, to weaken the DID effects. Narrative-wise, this creative fiction novel is set in 2022's America, where this story will highlight Ethan's daily life as the person that has DID, which creates a new identity, Elliot. The finding is that Ethan's DID effect cannot be cured, but it can be recovered with the help of Maydeline using the three approaches of DID treatment.

Keywords: awareness; Dissociative Identity Disorder; Family Dysfunction; Post-traumatic avoidance; personalities

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, mental health is a common discourse, and it has become a controversial psychiatric diagnosis that has opened a lot of psychiatric eyes (Reinders, et al., 2020). In the field of psychiatry, dissociative identity disorder (DID) holds a distinctive place. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it attracted the interest of numerous scientists, but because so many people contest the veracity of DID's existence, it became a topic that many scientists disagreed on (Dorahy, et al., 2014). According to the psychiatry journals in Australia and New Zealand, DID has developed into a mental health issue that is stigmatized in comparison to other mental health issues (Dorahy, et al., 2014). According to the International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation, a person with DID perceives multiple identities that are autonomous and different from one another (Mitra, et al., 2021). Based on the National Library of Medicine's global population, there were only 1.5% of people with DID detected in 1994, which is often misdiagnosed and requires multiple diagnoses and assessments (Mitra, et al., 2021).

The most important factor in determining disease recognition is symptoms. DID is usually determined by a disruption of consciousness, different memories between alternate identities, multiple identities, and different behaviors. We need to be aware of and understand the characteristics and symptoms of mental health problems that need treatments, especially since DID has a strong connection with PTSD, childhood trauma, and childhood abuse as the main causes (National Library of Medicine, 2022). DID symptoms or other mental health problems are usually divided into two categories: positive and negative symptoms, which are already outlined in the DSM-5. DSM-5 recognizes that positive symptoms in DID include additional behaviors that are typically not evident in those who do not have the illness, such as new personalities and derealization, while negative symptoms are behaviors that are absent or

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underdeveloped, as opposed to positive symptoms, which signify additional behaviors such as autism and paralysis, which are uncommon in DID patients.

The form I wish to utilize is novel. Based on Hawthorn's (2022) discussion about novels, a novel is a lengthy work of fiction written in prose that typically has a complicated or simple plot and is long enough to cover one or more volumes, with people and actions that represent the real life of past or present times that have a lot or less complexity (Hawthorn, 2022).

My main genre choice is "psychological fiction." Stories in psychological Fiction tend to focus heavily on internal characterization, motivations, setting, and action that results from external action. In the psychological subgenre, the author explains the reasons behind the acts rather than explaining what occurs (Malatesta, 2019).

The main point of my creative novel will be mental health, which is strongly attached to psychological areas. I use dissociative identity disorder for the theory. Based on the Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, DID is the rarest mental health problem, with only a 1.5% rate in the general population (Dorahy, et al., 2014). DID was first introduced in late 1880 by Dr. Jean-Martin Charcot, chief physician at Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris. He discovered a new unknown disease that has symptoms of a mental disorder that has a combination of hysteria and epilepsy, which is called hystero-Epilepsy (Psycom, 2018). Dissociative identity disorder (DID) is one of the rarest and most complex mental disorders. First of all, people with DID have difficulty determining themselves since they have two or more personalities. Based on an article from the *International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation*, which was written at the National Library of Medicine, the article describes DID as "a person who experiences separate identities that function independently of each other and are autonomous of each other"(Mitra, et al., 2022). It is also said that alternate identities have different characters, which determine their own behaviors and memories that are different from others' personalities and may be different in language and expression.

Causes

Typically, childhood sexual or physical trauma leads to DID. Based on Vedat Sar, he describes the cause of DID as dissociative identity disorder (DID) is a chronic post-traumatic disorder where developmentally stressful events in childhood, including abuse, emotional neglect, disturbed attachment, and boundary violations are central and typical etiological factors. Familial, societal, and cultural factors may give rise to the trauma, and/or they may influence the expression of DID, "(Sar, et.al., 2022)

Family Dysfunction

partly results from parents' own traumatic antecedents that pass developmental stress down through generations (Sar, et.al., 2022). Based on Vadet Sar on his view of Family Dysfunction, dysfunction in the family may partly originate from parents' own traumatic antecedents that lead to intergenerational transmission of developmental stress. In their empirical study, family members of patients with DID and related dissociative disorders reported frequent mood swings, intense anger and inability to control anger, transient dissociative experiences or paranoid ideas, and identity confusion more frequently than controls (Sar, et.al., 2022).

Post-traumatic avoidance

Based on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, “Emotional avoidance is when a person avoids thoughts or feelings about a traumatic event. This type of avoidance is internal to the person; others around you may not know what you are avoiding and why.” A person who avoids thoughts or feelings related to a traumatic incident is said to be post-traumatic avoidance (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2023). This kind of avoidance is personal to the individual; others may not be aware of what you are avoiding or why. For instance, if they are reminded of the trauma, someone who has undergone a sexual assault may want to remove themselves from unpleasant feelings like anxiety (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2023).

Treatment

Several three-pronged treatment plans for dissociative identity disorder incorporate fundamental structures from research on personality disorders. The first phase is concerned with the safety of DID patients because many of them exhibit suicidal thoughts and self-harming behaviors when they initially come (Mitra, et.al, 2021). It's critical to reduce that risk. Tolerance, processing, and integration of earlier trauma are all part of the second phase, which is dedicated to dealing with traumatic memories. This might concentrate on continuing to access unpleasant memories repeatedly using various alternate identities and might facilitate memory sharing (Mitra, et.al, 2021). The third and final stage of treatment mostly focuses on how the patient interacts with both themselves and the outside world. The development of a solid therapeutic partnership and trust is fostered throughout all periods of treatment (Mitra, et.al, 2021).

CONCEPT OF THE CREATIVE WORK

Theme

My theme is that a DID person should be able to accept him/herself so that he/she can be accepted by others. Finding out that someone with mental illness has an odd mental condition, one that is so unusual and causes disturbances in their daily life, is already a problem. Especially DID, which requires awareness from those around them to recover from their illness. People With DID can recover from the illness effects when he/she can accept themselves and their past. This theme will be represented through Ethan, my main character, who is haunted by traumatic events and has difficulty socializing with others. In order to hide from society following the tragic events that happen in his youth, Ethan creates a new identity, Elliot. Due to his mental health issues, Ethan finds it difficult to accept the help of others, but with the awareness of her friends, Maydeline will help him recover from the DID.

Plot

The story starts with Elliot in their second year at Townsend High School in New York. he does not have any friends, and he is always alone at school. There is no one who wants to become friends with him because Elliot has short-term memory that even cannot remember his classmate's name. But everything changes when the new student is transferred to Townsend High School, Maydeline the happy-go-lucky girl makes the ordinary and silent life of Elliot change. The curiosity of Maydeline wanting to be friends with Elliot, really makes Elliot's life face a new challenge, but Elliot keeps silent and ignores her.

One day, his homeroom teacher wants someone in the class to become the representative of the cultural festival committee, the enthusiastic Maydeline represents herself as the class representative and chooses Elliot to join the cultural festival committee. Since that day Elliot has become closer to Maydeline. They decide to meet up at the cafe where Elliot does

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part-time work. In that cafe, they discuss the cultural festival and the others. But on their way home, something strange happens, at the empty bridges at night, Elliot changes his behavior. Elliot, who is a subtle person, becomes more aggressive. Strange of all, Elliot does not recognize Maydeline at all and just leaves her alone.

The next day, Elliot wakes up and meets Stella, who is worried about him. He is told that he was found unconscious at the alley and helped by Maydeline to go home. When Elliot comes to school, Maydeline wants to spend some time talking with him about yesterday's accident. They decide to meet up at the Louvre Cafe, and at that place, Maydeline explains everything, including the fact that Elliot has another identity commonly known as dissociative identity disorder, a mental health disorder about having another autonomous identity that is caused by trauma in childhood. Where the trauma begins in Ethan's childhood and grows with an abusive, alcoholic, and gambling maniac father who always tortures Ethan and his mother. Until finally Ethan has enough of all of this and decides to kill his father. Hearing that thing, Elliot is really surprised and makes his other identity, Ethan, come out. Maydeline has a hard time making Ethan believe, but she really tries hard to help him. After a long time of debating, Ethan decides to accept help from Maydeline.

The next day Elliot comes back to consciousness, shocked to see Maydeline stay over at his house. With the secret plan of Maydeline and Stella, Maydeline decides to bring Elliot to Oklahoma, his own hometown. In Oklahoma, Thomas, who is Maydeline's uncle accompanies them during the trip. Three of them directly go to someplace that Elliot doesn't know, which is Ethan's home, where the accident happens. In that place, everything is okay at first, yet later, Ethan becomes triggered. Every memory that happens in that place, the fear and the trauma come back to Ethan's head and make him really frustrated until Ethan runs away and falls into a pit. Ethan that ends up at the hospital wakes up and sees Maydeline that stays beside him and waits for him to wake up. Maydeline cries and apologizes to Ethan. The next day, Maydeline brings Ethan to the Oklahoma memorial, where Ethan's mom is buried. There, Ethan finally comes back to see his mother again after hiding in Elliot for 7 years. Ethan cries and says everything inside his heart to his mother. After that with the help of Maydeline, Ethan finally realizes what he will do and finds his purpose in life, which is life for his mother and of course, Maydeline that always helps him until now. After that, they go home to New York.

Two months after the trip to Oklahoma, Ethan's life has become better with the help of Maydeline. He can go to school and adapt to the new environment. Maydeline and Ethan have a date to see Shakespeare's play at Central Park. In that place, he visits a lot of places, especially art galleries. They try the painting workshop together, Ethan really did a good job until Maydeline is enthusiastic and suggests he join art college, but Ethan just accepts it as a joke.

Then move to October when the cultural festival has begun. Maydeline comes to Ethan to ask for a request, which is to meet her at the rooftop at 11 o'clock, 1 hour before the after-party ends. After Ethan finishes their jobs, he directly goes to the rooftop to meet Maydeline. There they have a lot of fun together. They laugh and chat together, but it stops after Maydeline gives shocking news about her transfer to France to attend an art installation college. That news really hits Ethan pretty hard, until almost makes him fall into the same trauma, but Maydeline with her last energy suggests he attend France art college together with her since Ethan has potential at painting. Hearing that thing Ethan has hopes and is able to stay together with Maydeline again.

Characters

Main characters:

Ethan Summer, 17 years old, is a white American boy that has a neat haircut style and likes to use clay to fix his hair, he likes to wear a hoodie and long jeans. born into a moderate family. He has a dissociative S personality disorder, which creates a new personality, Elliot, to protect his past which is killing his abusive father. In most of his childhood, he suffers from deep pain after traumatic events killing his own father following his mother's death, making him fall into despair and create a new personality to protect himself from others, which is why he has a hard time socializing with others. He has a cold personality and a deep voice, which gives him a mysterious vibe and a strong character. He has a hidden skill which is cooking delicious food and playing basketball as a new hobby that is developed later in the story. Ethan has a wish that is really hard to fulfill, getting acknowledged by others, especially friends, which later Maydeline will interfere a lot too.

Elliot Summer, 17 years old, the new identity that is created by Ethan. Elliot has a contrasting personality to Ethan, he has a subtle and shy personality. He speaks in a low and slow tone, other than that he chooses to use formal language. He tends to wear a T-shirt, a blazer as his outer, and Jordan for the shoes. He let the hair loose. Elliot will be engaged in a lot of activities in school, replacing Ethan. Later he will create a team with Maydeline to save his other identity, Ethan. He likes to read classical literature and play music. Elliot has a special relationship with Maydeline to bring Ethan back alive.

Maydeline, 17 years old, is the oldest daughter of two. She is an American white girl that has long, dark black hair and purple pupils. She likes to wear a one-piece dress and pink colored T-shirts with jeans. She is a happy-go-lucky person with an extroverted personality. She lives in a rich family, where her parents own a big hospital that is located in the middle city of New York. Unlike the other rich family, Maydeline is always compared by her parents and relatives to her genius little sister, which makes Maydeline feel inferior. Because of her past. She does not have any friends because of her inferior personality, Maydeline decides to change and has a mission to befriend everyone in her class. Her hobbies are painting and playing the piano and violin. Her favorite animal is a cat

Supporting characters:

Stella Heissenberg, 35 years old. Ethan's aunt takes care of him after his tragic event. She is a white American lady that has short black hair and a tall figure. She always uses Blazers as the outer and T-shirts due to her job as a fashion designer. Stella is the only one who understands the pain that Ethan and his mother suffer but chooses to keep silent. With the feeling of responsibility, she decides to take care of Ethan and has the ambition to protect him and save Ethan from his trauma.

Thomas, 40 years old. Maydeline's uncle from his father. He is an American man that has a tall body and is skinny. He likes to dress like a farmer. He lives in Oklahoma because of his interest in farming. In this story, he will help Ethan and Maydeline during their trip to Oklahoma to overcome Ethan's fears.

Conflict

There are two main conflicts that happen in my creative work. The first one is a person against self, "Some protagonists are mostly dealing with internal struggles; the character may be dealing with fear, a traumatic history, an addiction, or a propensity to keep picking the wrong partners; it can add significant complexity to my creative work." (McNulty, 2021). The second one is person against person, which is where my character is. "When two people or more are at odds with each other, there may not be a clear right or wrong, or both sides may think they are right." This is known as a "person-against-person conflict" (McNulty, 2021). Both types happen in every story, but the "person against self" is more dominant because I want to show the

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struggles of my main character in blending in with society with his new personality. This will be portrayed by Ethan refusing Elliott's assistance to get out of his past.

CONCLUSION

It is official to say that I am a different person now that I have completed this thesis and my creative efforts. I have learned a lot in this brief period from my lecturers, the lesson they teach, the assignment I was given, and the information and experience I picked up along the road. Through writing this creative work, I want to show the effects of dissociative identity disorder and how to weaken dissociative identity disorder. It took me a long time and a lot of effort to complete this final project, but I believe I do my best to address the statement of the problem that I make in the first chapter of this thesis with explanations and solutions, thereby fulfilling the study's objective.

The first issue is how Ethan creates a new alternative identity to protect himself from the trauma. The main cause is family dysfunction in which conflict, misbehavior, and often child neglect or abuse occurs repetitively. The family dysfunction will be shown in the story through Ethan's past, in which he has an abusive, alcoholic, and gambling maniac father that always tortures him and his mother. The climax is when his father wants to take his school tuition money from his mother, but she refuses until the result is his father killing his own mother, which makes Ethan disgusted with his father and decide to kill him. Killing his own father does not make him feel happy because he is able to avenge his mother's death, but it just makes him feel trauma about it. The trauma itself is created also because he experiences post-traumatic avoidance. Post-traumatic avoidance is when a person avoids thoughts or feelings about a traumatic event, it shows when Ethan cannot hold his emotion and trauma after he kills his own father, and he decides to create an alternative Identity to protect and run from the trauma that he experienced.

The second issue is how to weaken dissociative identity disorder effects. The main idea is by using a three-phased approach that focuses on safety and stability, processing traumatic events, and being able to live without dissociating. This approach will be represented through three main events that will be explained in my creative works. Safety and stability are about boosting DID sufferers' feelings of safety while focusing on more severe symptoms like self-harm or suicidal ideation. It will be explained when Ethan knows the fact that he has created new alternative personalities to protect himself from the trauma and continue his life as another identity, which is Elliot. Completing the first approach takes a long time because people with DID always have a hard time identifying themselves if he has DID or not. Usually, they need help from others, like family, friends, or even professionals.

The second phase is focused on identifying, addressing, and moving past upsetting memories. This technique teaches people with DID how to control their reactions to negative memories and to learn how to shield themselves from distress in a safe environment. The avoidance of re-traumatization will be shown through Ethan finding his purpose of life. In the beginning, Ethan feels as if he doesn't have any right to live in this world because he always makes other people trouble, like the death of her mother and father, but in the end with the help of Maydeline, he finds his purpose of life, which is life for her belated mother and for Maydeline. In addition, he slowly accepts the past.

The third phase is people with DID will learn to operate in society without using dissociative defenses. Ethan starts to adjust himself by attending the class without using Elliot's identity and with the help of Maydeline. The next thing is Ethan and Elliot already find a way to live together and side by side. The final point is Ethan will start to study art, which is painting that will help him on his journey in this world without worrying about his past life.

By using the two issues in this creative work, I hope the reader will understand and realize that people with DID are in danger and that other people should help them. For people with mental health issues who read my creative works, I hope that they will have the courage and awareness to speak up about their disease because mental health is a serious issue that needs other people's help and even professional help.

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