



Autism & Plurality: How common are autistic systems?

Are autistic people more
susceptible to being a system?

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What does plurality mean?

Plurality/Plural is an umbrella term used to describe anyone who is more than one. More than one identity/self/personality.

This is also known as a system or multiple/multiplicity.

There are two types of plurals:

- **Traumagenic systems**

Systems created from childhood trauma are called traumagenic systems. They are usually diagnosed as Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), previously multiple personalities, Otherwise Specified Dissociative Disorder (OSDD), and Partial Dissociative Identity Disorder (P-DID).

- **endogenic systems**

Some people describe their systems as non-traumagenic or endogenic, meaning they understand their system as not originating from childhood trauma.

Some cultures experience plurality as a spiritual practice, such as shamanic practices, ancestral guides, and/or spirit mediumship. Some people experience their systems as religious roles, such as deities, mystical entities, and/or spirit guides.

Every system determines its own purpose and meaning. And a diagnosis of DID/OSDD/P-DID does not mean the system is disordered. Traumagenic systems develop to adapt to inescapable childhood trauma.

80% of Plurals identify as Autistic

The Plural Census 2025,
The Plural Association.

Lived experience is revealing how common plurality is amongst autistic people. And this may be because autistic people can experience trauma more deeply than their peers, which can lead to complex trauma and dissociation as a coping skill. Trauma symptoms are often felt more severely; in particular, how the autistic person interprets the trauma can impact the severity. Trauma is frequently underdiagnosed in autistic folk, which means they go without care and support. (Prosser et al., 2025; Lobregt-van Buuren et al., 2021).

In addition to trauma symptoms being felt more severely, autistic people experience many non-life-threatening events as traumatic, influenced by our neurotype (Rumball et al., 2020).

Autistic people may be more likely to develop PTSD because of this deep-felt experience of trauma, but may go undiagnosed. This means current diagnostic frameworks can miss or invalidate autistic trauma and the ways we cope with complex trauma. Plurality might be the only coping strategy available to an autistic child experiencing overwhelming childhood trauma, and could explain why systems are so common in autistic trauma survivors.

Plurality in autistic people is widely underresearched; there is very little direct research on the topic. There is solid research that autistic people experience higher rates of dissociation, which is linked to trauma, bullying, and PTSD symptoms (Dincel & Karayagmurlu, 2025; Reuben et al., 2021)

Clinicians and researchers note that autism, trauma, and dissociation can look similar or overlap. This can lead to: misdiagnosis or missed diagnosis. Clinicians report difficulty distinguishing DID from other presentations in autistic people (Nandipati S & Reddy A., 2025)

Autistic systems exist, and this means a trauma-informed approach to their care and diagnosis is paramount.

Listening to lived experience and including autistic systems stories in advocacy and awareness will help bridge the current gap in understanding them.

Storytelling is how we change perceptions, stigma, and the lack of available support to autistic systems.

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