

Many years ago, I read a book entitled [Multiple Man: Explorations in Possession and Multiple Personalities](#). It is one of those books that has always stuck in my mind because it facilitated some deep thinking on the nature of what we call 'self'. It highlighted how malleable we are as human beings and underlined the enormous inherent potential we carry within us. I was again reminded of the human potential by the movie Split. No, I do not think there the final transformation which occurs in that movie is a human possibility, but there is enough factual data within that movie which should cause pause for reflection and contemplation.

Consider some of what is observable in people with dissociative personality disorder. A person who has dissociative personality disorder has multiple identities who typically have become so fragmented that in effect there is a discontinuity between one identity and the next. To understand this more fully consider that you the reader also consist of multiple identities which get played out as roles. For example, you may be a very different person at work than you are as a parent. Even in a work role or parent role, we can be very different in each role. If people did not know better they would swear black and blue that it is not the same person.

In our minds though there is a continuity between one role or identity and the next. We recognize our self in each role and when we transition between identities. In dissociative identity disorder, it is not unusual for one identity to not recognize another, even though they both inhabit the same body. The fragmentation of identity is so great that each role functions independently of others at a conscious level. In many instances people with this disorder do not recognize that there has been a switch in identity and instead experience a type of black out. Later, and much to their surprise they might learn of all manner of behaviour they engaged in, but have no conscious recollection of them.

Sybill is one famous movie that highlights the phenomena of dissociative personality disorder. There are other movies which also portray the plight of dissociative identity disorder sufferers, but perhaps Sybill is the most famous of all. At any rate, it is useful to think of the disorder as occurring along a continuum. At one end of the continuum, we have the full-blown disorder of dissociative identity disorder. At the other end, we would have someone who is so rigid in their personality structure that they almost come across as catatonic - at least in the sense they seem to have only a very narrow range of responses to very different situations. Most people are in the middle of this continuum and therefore have a bit more flexibility. Though if we look in earnest and are honest with ourselves we often find we also respond very rigidly to situations. But that is another story better left for another time.



This does not mean we should start to do away with medicine or medicines. If we cut our finger off, it is not going to miraculously leap back on and heal itself. But we should be starting to pay attention to the inherent healing potential of our minds. In a fashion, we have to open ourselves up to differing possibilities and do some extensive research and experimentation to unlock some of the mysteries within.

In my own work as a therapist/teacher I have observed that sometimes illness, pain, misery which has not been amenable to change via traditional medical approaches heal when some underlying psychological issue is dealt with. Our minds can greatly affect us, and in turn our physiology can greatly affect our minds. The work of the mind is often tangled and it is frequently messy, yet if we can unravel ourselves and steer ourselves in a different direction much can be accomplished.

On a final note, I am aware that several people are proponents of the power of belief. The above might suggest that we only must consciously believe in something and some miraculous healing will occur. While this notion is popular among the new age and pseudo spiritual communities it is an erroneous one scientifically- it is worthwhile spending some time on reading about how our thoughts do not create reality.