

Please note: This article addresses dissociative identity disorder, formerly known as multiple personality disorder, in a humorous way in order to broach a serious and painful subject. No disrespect is intended, and hopefully none will be taken.

Dating has many pitfalls. I had to learn this the hard way, as I have learned so many other things in my life.

After a three-year hiatus from dating, I was approached by a casual friend of mine who tried talking me into asking her best friend out for coffee. I demurred, but she insisted, and insisted and insisted.

Her friend, whom I had met and spoken to briefly, looked and acted like the stereotypical librarian. I wasn't interested in someone who was seemingly so serious.

Then I figured, "What the heck, it won't kill me," gave in and e-mailed the woman. When we met at a restaurant, I was considerably surprised to be entertaining a sophisticated woman of the world.

Her name was Sioux. Mind you, I didn't know her name was Sioux; I thought it was Sue.

Actually, her name was Sioux Mallard. Hippie New Age parents? No, not even.

After the third date I discovered Sioux Mallard wasn't her birth name. It was a name she found more descriptive of herself.

While getting to know Sioux, I was impressed with her ability to appear comfortable in and adapt to a variety of situations—like migrating mallards. At times it seemed



More than she bargained for

Portland woman gets a crash course in dating more than one person at a time

as if she was someone entirely different from the woman I initially had spent time with.

Three months into dating Sioux, the reasons for her adaptability were made apparent. Not only was I dating Sioux, I was dating: Sara, Betty, Kathy, George (fabulous dresser), Little Susie, Fauna and—the one I enjoyed most—Sexy Sadie. But the trouble with Sadie was, after a wonderful night, someone else always broke up with me the next day.

There were a host of other identities I never met. After all, I only dated Sioux seven months.

During this time it became evident to me I wasn't equipped emotionally or psychologically to contend with this varied array of characters. I realized a polyamorous relationship with one person was not for me. Don't think I didn't try, but I discovered if I am going to change partners, I prefer to do it with separate people over a length of time.

Although I look back at this relationship

with a certain amount of fondness, rest assured I will approach dating differently in the future. Not only will I require complete health and psychiatric backgrounds, I also will hire a private detective to verify that information.

It will be worth it. Unfortunately, nobody offered that advice to me.

Here are some more red flags to watch out for. You know your partner is a multiple when:

- You go to the movies and she asks for the child, student and senior discount rates.
- She saves up all year for her therapists' birthday presents.
- Her dog responds to a dozen different names.
- She asks for extra name tags at a convention.
- You call to invite her to a concert, and seven different people reply.
- Her bathroom has six different toothbrushes, and she lives alone.

Seriously, though, dissociative identity disorder is defined as:

1. The existence within the person of two or more distinct personalities or personality states (each with its own relatively enduring pattern of perceiving, relating to and thinking about the environment and self).

2. At least two of these personalities or personality states recurrently take full control of the person's behavior.

The disorder is caused by severe childhood abuse. Dissociation is common among child abuse survivors. In its most severe form, it manifests as dissociative identity disorder.

According to Dr. Colin Ross, multiple personality disorder is not a fantastic curiosity in which there is more than one person in the same body. There is only one person—an abuse victim who has imagined that other people are inside her in order to survive. This is an adaptive use of the human imagination.

Dissociative identity disorder affects an estimated one in 100 people, or 2 million in this country. The majority are women. Treatment is possible but difficult and lengthy.

If someone close to you says she has dissociative identity disorder or multiple personality disorder, take it seriously. After conducting some research, I realized many of my partner's behaviors that I found hurtful weren't about me; they were simply coping mechanisms she learned in order to care for herself. **JV**

More information about DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER can be found at www.wermany.org/reading/faq.htm and members.aol.com/MinEncourg/WbPgMPDQuestions.htm.

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