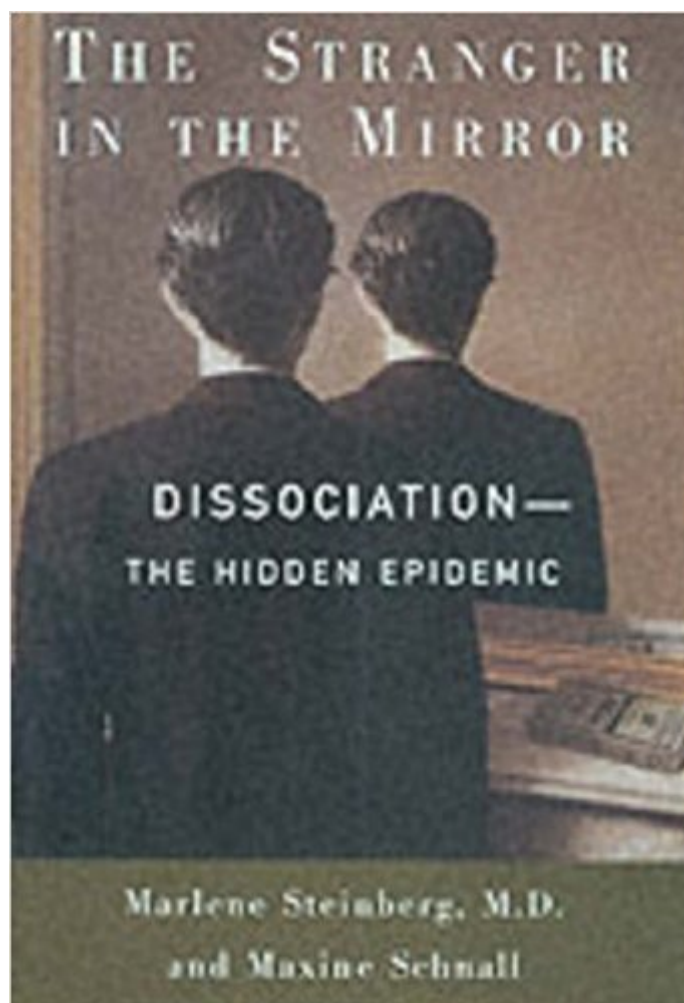


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THE STRANGER IN THE MIRROR: Dissociation: The Hidden Epidemic



Synopsis

You peer into the mirror and have trouble recognizing yourself. You can't remember if you actually did something or only thought you did. You feel as if you're going through the motions of life. These are all symptoms of dissociation--a fragmented state of consciousness involving feelings of disconnection and amnesia that affects 30 million individuals in North America alone. The surprising truth revealed in *The Stranger in the Mirror*, a groundbreaking book based on eighteen years of pioneering research, is that millions of people have dissociative symptoms that have gone undetected or untreated. This hidden epidemic has occurred simply because people have been unable to identify their problem, or were not asked the right questions about their symptoms. Since dissociation can be a person's standard response to trauma, its symptoms are a common reaction to such life-threatening events as a car accident or such intense, lasting traumas as rape. There is a strong possibility that you or someone you know suffers from some dissociative condition. Because dissociative experiences are often illusive and hard to describe, they are rarely reported to therapists. *The Stranger in the Mirror* offers the general public unique guidelines for identifying dissociative symptoms, as well as for treatment and recovery. It not only debunks many myths surrounding dissociation but also offers some startling revelations. For example, normal people experience dissociative symptoms in everyday life, and dissociation is as widespread as anxiety and depression and may explain such intriguing phenomena as past lives and near-death or out-of-body experiences. Based on rigorous scientific testing, Dr. Marlene Steinberg has developed a breakthrough diagnostic tool for dissociation, one embraced by the mental health community as the "gold standard." The book's questionnaires, based on this test, will help you identify your own dissociative symptoms and will alert you to possible underlying dissociative causes of such pervasive conditions as anxiety, depression, manic-depression, attention-deficit hyper-activity disorder (ADHD), obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or even schizophrenia. If you have concerns about your own or a loved one's psychological health, this is a must-read book. Filled with gripping and moving case histories of people with multiple personality or other dissociative conditions, *The Stranger in the Mirror* will take you behind the closed doors of the psychiatrist's office on a fascinating journey through the therapeutic process, providing enlightening insights into how all of us respond to trauma and overcome it. The innovative method of treatment described in this important book--the "Four C's," comfort, communication, cooperation, and connection--can benefit anyone in search of a healthier sense of self and a heightened capacity for joy.

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Customer Reviews

What do the Columbine killings, "getting lost in a good book" and your midlife crisis have in common? According to psychiatrist Steinberg, they are all events that can be placed on a broad continuum of behaviors related to dissociative identity disorder, popularly known as multiple personality. Steinberg, whose research was supported with grants from the National Institute of Mental Health, argues with conviction that mild dissociative behaviorAtemporary episodes of disconnection or memory lossAcan be a useful mechanism for coping with such mundane but stressful events as giving public presentations as well as major traumas like an operation or an assault. In more extreme forms, it is a debilitating disorderAsimilar, she argues, to attention deficit disorderAthat is in need of psychiatric recognition and intervention. Arguing that DID often results from early childhood abuse, Steinberg passionately calls for removing the stigma from its related behaviors, noting that the popular conception of the disorder is gleaned from overblown films such as *Sybil* and *The Three Faces of Eve*. Readers can gauge their own dissociative tendencies with the book's abridged version of the Steinberg clinical interview for DSM-IV dissociative disorders. Readers interested in clinical depression and ADD will gravitate to this book, although Steinberg's throwaway comments that suggest that seeing "alternative" lifestyles depicted on TV can cause psychic confusion and that stepparents have a greater tendency to violate the incest prohibition may cost her some otherwise sympathetic readers. While DID doesn't have as much cultural currency as ADD, Steinberg's research has much to add to the contentious debates surrounding childhood trauma, diagnostic categories and the changing relationship between incurable disease and

manageable disorder. Agent, Mary Tahan. (Oct.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Multiple personality disorders (MPD) are now subsumed under the rubric dissociative identity disorders (DID), or just plain dissociation. Most DID cases are the result of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse in childhood. Psychiatrist Steinberg puts her considerable research and clinical experience to the purpose of making it clear that DID is a "hidden epidemic," that many of its sufferers are misdiagnosed and fail to receive proper early treatment, and that the sensationalism of many MPD cases of yore (e.g., *The Three Faces of Eve*) has warped physicians' as well as public attitudes. In addition, she explodes the five most common myths about dissociation and describes its five core symptoms. She uses three long case histories to illustrate the beginning and development of DID (drunkenness and abuse played major roles in these instances), and she offers practical steps for rehabilitation. Her work in the field reached a peak when the Steinberg Clinical Interview process was given a place in the fourth edition of psychiatry's bible, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*. William Beatty Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Well written and thoughtful. Although it very often felt like a commercial for her SCID-D tool (which is undoubtedly a landmark tool for our times). I sense a tendency to push a bit more than needed into this diagnosis like square pegs into round holes. But it makes great sense to me personally how widespread and under appreciated this syndrome is, and the explanation that it also has severity levels is so helpful. The book was useful for me personally and shed light on some I know personally. What a needed tool splitting and dissociation is for traumatic situations especially in young children, and how pervasive it becomes in the architecture of their later lives-forever in so many cases. Bravo for this helpful tool and tome to understand what is prevalent in our society. This book helps raise awareness without being preachy and so importantly for not being judgemental but pointing out gently a set of symptoms that have meaning, now, and also can have some hope for alleviation.

Having dealt with dissociation all my life. I find the importance of understanding, learning and accepting expert explanations of how all people have forms of dissociation...from highway hypnosis to amnesia. The variables in one's life, give evidence to the gravity of one's skill level as we live together in community. Trauma is an injury to a person, physical, psychological, spiritual. There is a continuum on the trauma register giving evidence for such injuries. Dr. Marlene Steinberg MD has been a force in helping experts diagnose the level of injury. From PTSD to DID. Healing happens as

the trauma is delineated. This is proven research designating the type of degree of psychological injury being experienced by the trauma survivor. From here to recovery with Trauma specialists is possible. My shrink recommended it. It helps validate the abstractness of my injury. Excellent

I was diagnosed with DID earlier this year. Although a part of me suspected as much, I've still had a difficult time accepting this as my reality. However, reading this has helped tremendously in terms of being able to identify with other people, not to mention the overwhelming evidence that points right to DID. The only "down side," I suppose, is all the time spent trying to promote the screening tool the author created for dissociative disorders. Overall, an excellent resource.

What I particularly noticed when I read this book was the amount of compassion Dr. Steinberg appears to have for her patients and dissociative individuals in general. Dr. Steinberg is the creator of the SCID-D, known as the "gold standard" for testing for dissociative disorders. She also has a great deal of experience in treating dissociative patients. Clearly, she is well qualified to write this book. Personally, I found this remarkable blend of professional insight and human compassion to be a delightful breath of fresh air. No single text, in and of itself, I feel, can make anyone into an "expert" on any subject. Period. However, if one has a desire to learn about and understand dissociative symptoms and disorders, this is an excellent resource whether one is a complete neophyte in regard to the subject of dissociation, or simply desiring to gain a richer understanding of what they already know about dissociative disorders. In my honest and humble opinion, I find this to be an excellent read which I have already recommended to others I know in my personal life. In all likelihood, I will probably read this book again soon as I have certainly kept thinking about the information presented within its pages since I read it. This is truly a wonderful book.

Steinberg is clearly the clearest and most insightful writer on the difficulties of dissociation. Good for therapists and clients.

well written. too bad people have to suffer; but the book really depicts it well.

I have depersonalization and experience derealization 24/7. This book is good for someone with this disorder. It explains well what causes this disorder, if your experiences are mild, moderate, or severe. After each several chapters, you can take the SCID-D test that will tell you where you stand on the continuum spectrum. This is good, even though it's just a preliminary questionnaire test. She

suggests that the entire test should be taken by a trained specialist. This book has an emphasize for people with DID. There are three stories of three women who have DID, but they do however experience depersonalization and derealization. Less emphasize on DID would of been better although I did enjoy the stories. She dismisses UFO abductions, past lives, and near death experiences as people who are really experiencing dissociative symptoms. She is correct that the symptoms do show up a lot in these cases, but her explanation does not explain not even half of the different kinds of cases. I bought Feeling Unreal for depersonalization and it wasn't that good I must admit. After chapter 3, it starts getting technical and a lot of searching for terminology you will be required to search, unless you're a professional or already have a lot of knowledge with depersonalization. That's why I recommend this book. It easy to read, gives a lot of explanations, and offers some techniques to help you cope with your dissociative disorder.

This book was very helpful for both gaining knowledge about assessing DID and a baseline for treatment. The only part I was not thrilled with was the authors suggestions on topics such as alien abduction, past life's and near death experience. What is it they say....any theory that explains everything explains nothing? I think I would rather (as I have) read on those topics by professionals who understand spiritual dimensions, quantum physics and larger realities. Not to say that it wasn't interesting to hear her view...but it was a very narrow and mechanical viewpoint.

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