

The Jekyll and Hyde Syndrome

*What to Do If Someone in Your Life
Has a Dual Personality—or If You Do*

BEVERLY ENGEL



John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

The
Jekyll and Hyde
Syndrome

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This book is dedicated to all who care about someone who is a Jekyll and Hyde and all who suffer from the syndrome. May you find help and encouragement in the information and the stories shared here.

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Of course, this book could not have been written without the short story by Robert Louis Stevenson or the work of Carl Jung. I am deeply indebted to both of them.

Introduction

More than a decade before Freud delved into the depths of the human psyche, Robert Louis Stevenson had an extremely revealing dream. In it, a man was being pursued for a crime. He swallowed a powder and underwent a drastic change of character, so drastic that he was unrecognizable. The man, a kind, hardworking scientist named Dr. Jekyll, was transformed into the violent and relentless Mr. Hyde, whose evil took on greater and greater proportions as the dream unfolded.

Stevenson developed the dream into the now famous tale *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in 1886. Its theme has become so much a part of popular culture that we often refer to someone who is exhibiting erratic behavior as a “real Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.” People have been fascinated with the Jekyll and Hyde phenomenon for more than a hundred years now, starting with the popularity of the Robert Louis Stevenson story. When a story like this touches so many people in such a profound way, it must speak to a place in us that is universal and instinctive.

We’ve all had the experience of being surprised by our mood shifts or shocked by the words that suddenly come out of our mouths. Many of us have been alarmed that we are capable of

becoming angry, unreasonable people we barely recognize. The truth is, we all have the capacity to act in ways that are radically different from how we normally behave, some people more than others. No one is all good or all bad. The difference is that some of us are able to contain or keep down the so-called bad sides of ourselves and others are not.

While each of us does contain both a Dr. Jekyll and a Mr. Hyde personality—a more pleasant persona for everyday wear and a hiding, nighttime self that remains quiet most of the time—there are people who live out their lives in these extremes. Loving and kind one moment and angry and punishing the next, these people bewilder, hurt, and anger those who are close to them.

Although the phrase “Jekyll and Hyde” is commonly used in our culture, few people really understand much about the type of personality that changes so radically for no apparent reason. This is the first self-help book to explain in detail the various causes of this syndrome, how it is manifested, and the damage it can inflict on those who are close to such a person.

Who Will Be Interested in This Book

This book will interest many people for different reasons. We each have a dark side, a part of us that we keep hidden from others and often from ourselves. While some of us are better than others at managing our dark sides, there are far more people suffering from the Jekyll and Hyde syndrome than one might suspect. When we look at the causes of the syndrome, we can understand how the numbers can add up. For example, many people who suffer from the Jekyll and Hyde syndrome have a history of child abuse and neglect. More than 3 million cases of child abuse were reported in 1997, according to the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse and the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. Add to this the fact that an estimated one in thirteen adults in the United States has grown up with overly controlling parents—another major factor in creating a Jekyll and Hyde personality—and the numbers increase tremendously. Many people with this syndrome suffer

from either borderline personality disorder (BPD) or narcissistic personality disorder (NPD). When we add the numbers of people who suffer from BPD (between 10 and 20 million Americans) and NPD (an estimated 5 million Americans), we can see that the numbers are substantial.

Readers will learn how to deal with people in their lives (including lovers, family members, bosses, and friends) who behave in radically different ways. Others who are troubled by their own radical mood shifts, bizarre behavior, and conflicting personalities will learn why these things occur and how to begin to integrate their personalities.

There is another important aspect to this book. Oftentimes, the Jekyll and Hyde syndrome becomes a form of emotional abuse. In fact, most emotional abusers exhibit some form of the Jekyll and Hyde syndrome. Emotional abuse has taken the place of sexual abuse and domestic violence as the most talked about form of abuse, both in the media and in recovery circles. Perhaps this is because in many ways it is the last frontier in terms of facing how abuse permeates and shapes our culture. As I did in *The Emotionally Abusive Relationship*, in this book I provide concrete strategies for change, whether the reader is an emotional abuser or a victim of someone who is emotionally abusive.

Although this is primarily a self-help book, it also provides an in-depth exploration of the duality within us all. Important information about Carl Jung's concept of the human Shadow is provided for readers to gain a deeper understanding of their own Jekyll and Hyde tendencies, as well as guidance on how they can learn to embrace their dark sides instead of partitioning them off into separate parts of themselves.

In addition to appealing to those who are involved with a Jekyll and Hyde and those who suffer from the syndrome themselves, the book will interest those who are fascinated by people who exhibit the Jekyll and Hyde syndrome. For example, two years ago the nation became obsessed with the Scott Peterson case—the story of how a seemingly good husband and all-around nice guy was revealed to be an unfaithful playboy and, even worse, the murderer of his wife and unborn child. People who were close to Scott were

shocked to discover that he had created a double life for himself. He was a doting husband, on the one hand, and a man who had numerous affairs, on the other; a man who was seemingly happy that his wife was having a baby and at the same time a man who shared with others that he did not want to have a child.

The truth is, there are many people like Scott Peterson who live double lives. Many seemingly exceptional human beings—people who are often kind, giving, and dedicated to helping others—also have dark sides, hidden from their families and friends. In 2006, we learned of two more cases of Jekyll and Hyde behavior: Congressman Mark Foley and Reverend Ted Haggard. Underneath the perfect public persona often lies someone who is the opposite—cruel, selfish, and hurtful to others. Now and then, one of these dual personalities gets exposed, and we are always shocked and fascinated to realize they live within our midst.

People want to know how a church leader, a boy scout leader, and an upstanding citizen could also be the BTK serial killer. They want to know whether Michael Jackson is really as sweet, innocent, and childlike as he appears or whether he is hiding a far more sinister dark side capable of manipulating and molesting children. This book will explain to the lay person why certain people are prime candidates for developing dual personalities and how these people are able to get away with atrocious acts of violence or betrayal because their good sides are so charming, lovable, or upstanding.

When cases like those of Scott Peterson, the BTK killer, and Michael Jackson emerge, we are plagued with questions:

- How do people like this fool so many people?
- Why is it that people such as ministers, doctors, and teachers who do so much good in the world are often the ones who shock us the most with their capacity to harm others?
- Is there such a thing as having a split personality that causes a person to behave in these radically opposite ways?

In *The Jekyll and Hyde Syndrome: What to Do If Someone in Your Life Has a Dual Personality—or If You Do*, readers will get answers to these questions.

In summary, this book explains in detail why certain people seem to have two strong sides to their personalities—so much so that they seem like two distinct people. I provide questionnaires to help readers determine whether they are in a relationship with a Jekyll and Hyde or whether they themselves suffer from this syndrome. I will help readers who suffer from this syndrome to integrate their personalities and those who are in a relationship with such a person to determine whether there is hope for the relationship, whether they and their children are safe with such a person, and whether they should continue the relationship or not.

P A R T I

*Understanding the Jekyll
and Hyde Syndrome*

1

What Is the Jekyll and Hyde Syndrome?

When she was good
She was very, very good,
But when she was bad she was horrid.

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

We all experience mood shifts from time to time. We are all multifaceted people who show different sides of ourselves depending on the circumstances and whom we associate with. And we are all sometimes shocked by our own actions or by the words that come out of our mouths. Yet there are some people whose mood shifts are far from normal, people who experience radical changes in their moods or violent outbursts for no apparent reason—people who become enraged, abusive, violent, depressed, or sullen at the drop of a hat. Some not only show different sides of themselves depending on the situation, but they are capable of creating double lives or entirely different personalities—personalities that would be unrecognizable to people who know them in other contexts.

These people suffer from what I call the Jekyll and Hyde syndrome. Someone with the Jekyll and Hyde syndrome seems at

times to be two different people. Many people with this syndrome experience radical mood swings, often for no apparent reason. They can seem happy or normal one minute and the next become deeply depressed, angry, critical, or afraid. Often, this involves suddenly getting angry with those who are closest to them. They may fly into a rage and accuse their partners or children of doing something to hurt them when the other people are totally innocent. Or they may suddenly become critical, finding fault with their loved ones, their coworkers, or anyone who is in close proximity.

This is how my client Leslie described her husband's behavior: "You'll never meet a kinder man than my husband. He is so generous and loving. He has dozens of friends who adore him. And most of the time he is wonderful to me. But every once in a while something sets him off and he becomes this horrible man who says terribly cruel things to me. He'll berate me for the smallest things and insist that I don't love him, that I'm a terrible wife, that he deserves to be with someone who will treat him better. For years I took his complaints seriously and tried to change the things about myself that he didn't like. But no matter how much I changed, he just kept finding things to complain about. I'm beginning to think that I really have nothing to do with his moods."

Often, the people who experience these radical mood shifts don't seem to be aware that they have changed. Leslie continued: "The scary thing is that when he switches back to his normal self, he often can't even remember the cruel things he's said to me. When I tell him about how he has talked to me, he insists it can't be true. That's why I've come to realize that it really isn't me—it's him."

Instead of getting angry and lashing out at those closest to them, some Jekyll and Hydes suddenly become withdrawn, depressed, or sullen, as was the case with my client Andrew's wife. "You never know when Sheila's mood will change and she will become withdrawn," Andrew said. "Sometimes she wakes up that way; other times, she'll come home from work that way. I'll ask her what is wrong, and she insists that there is nothing going on. But you'd have to be blind not to see that something is bothering her. She barely talks to me or the kids, and she ends up going to bed and staying there for hours, even days sometimes. Then the mood just

seems to pass and she's her old self again. She refuses to talk about what happened and gets angry with me if I try to push her. I've learned to just try to ignore it, but it's hard on us. I just never know when I'm going to lose my wife and the kids will lose their mother for several hours or even days. And I feel bad for her—there's no telling what kind of emotional torture she's going through."

Two Faces

Sometimes a Jekyll and Hyde's duality shows up in the fact that the person acts radically different depending on whom he or she is around or often on whether he or she is in a public place or someplace private. Many of them show one face to their friends and the public while showing another to their partners or families. For example, Carl is a mild-mannered project manager for a multi-million dollar corporation. His boss is a tyrant who insists on Carl always completing his projects perfectly and on time—even when Carl hasn't been given adequate lead time. If Carl's boss finds one mistake or isn't completely impressed with Carl's performance, he humiliates Carl in front of his coworkers. Carl is too intimidated by his boss to confront him and too afraid he'll get a bad review and not be able to find another job if he were to quit. So Carl takes his frustrations out on his wife and children. At home with his family, Carl is an entirely different person. At home he is the tyrant.

The moment Carl walks in the door, his children are supposed to drop whatever they are doing to come to greet him and report to him whether they have completed their chores. He then follows each child around the house or the yard, inspecting the area to make sure the job was done right. If a chore is not completed to his satisfaction, he insists that the child go back and work on it until the job is done just right. After finishing their chores, the children must sit down with Carl and show him their completed homework. Carl is a stickler for perfection and often browbeats a child for getting something wrong. Dinner will be held up for the entire family until all of the children have completed their homework to their father's satisfaction.

While many Jekyll and Hydes tend to be abusive when they switch over into another personality, others act out dark urges that are completely uncharacteristic of them. For example, Reverend Thomas Henderson is a highly respected minister in a conservative church that counsels against drinking alcohol, sex outside of marriage, dancing, and gambling. Although he fervently believes in the church and its teachings, Reverend Henderson experiences intense fantasies and desires that he cannot seem to control. He is such a charismatic speaker and is so highly regarded that he is asked to be the guest minister at various churches around the United States. Unfortunately, traveling to a strange city affords Reverend Henderson an opportunity to act out his darker urges. As much as he tries to resist, he is too weak to fight them.

While he is away, Reverend Henderson takes on another persona—that of a loud, boisterous man who goes to bars, drinks, dances, and flirts with women. If people in his congregation were to run into him, they would barely recognize him. Other than his physical features being the same, everything else about Reverend Henderson is different. Gone is his respectful, quiet demeanor and in its place is a vociferous, crude attitude. He even dresses differently. In the place of his conservative suit is a tight T-shirt and jeans. At the end of each evening, Reverend Henderson takes a new woman back to his hotel room for sex.

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

The Jekyll and Hyde syndrome is named after the classic Robert Louis Stevenson story *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The story is about a man not too different from Reverend Henderson—an upstanding, tee-totaling, philanthropic doctor who turns into a womanizing, drinking, murderous scoundrel, seemingly overnight. In addition to this being an engaging tale, it is also much more. It is a metaphor for a phenomenon that is all too common—the fact that so-called good people often have a dark side, a part of themselves they keep hidden from themselves and

others. In some cases, this dark side actually forms a distinct personality radically different from the public persona, as was the case with Reverend Henderson. Ironically, it is often people who stand out as the most moral, the most kind, and the most magnanimous who are most likely to fall. It is, in fact, a rule of nature that the higher up on a pedestal we put ourselves or allow others to put us, the farther we have to fall.

For those of you who haven't read this story (and for anyone who read it a long time ago), here is the basic plot: Dr. Jekyll worried a little too much about how others perceived him. He had an investment in being viewed by others as a pillar of the community, but secretly he had the desire to act out some of his darker urges. And so he concocted a brew that would allow him to venture into the dark side of human nature, experience its forbidden pleasures, and then return to his more acceptable self, seemingly unscathed. Most important, he didn't have to take responsibility for what his darker self did during his excursions.

While many people with the Jekyll and Hyde syndrome are like the original Dr. Jekyll who completed his transformation in the darkness of night, with no one else witnessing his change, other Jekyll and Hydes change their personalities or experience their mood shifts in front of others. For example, a normally pleasant, amiable man can suddenly turn into an insulting, abusive monster, devastating his wife with his sharp criticism of her, going on a rampage and destroying property, or even becoming physically violent toward his family. A typically doting mother can suddenly burst into a rage, calling her children horrible names, throwing objects across the room, and even driving off without them to teach them a lesson.

Jennifer devotes her life to her husband and children. She is a stay-at-home mom who is usually patient and loving with her children, four-year-old Erin and six-year-old Josh. Yet sometimes, for no apparent reason, Jennifer becomes impatient and critical of her kids and husband. Nothing they do will please her. It's as if she is looking at them through different eyes. The qualities she complimented them on days earlier seem to have completely slipped her mind, and all she can see are their faults. "It's all or nothing with my

wife," her husband, Bill, told me when, out of desperation, he came to me for help. "You're either the greatest person she ever met or the worst. When she puts you in the 'bad' box, there is nothing you can do to make her like you. I've learned to just lay low and wait for her to put me in the 'good' box soon. But I don't want my kids to have to grow up this way."

How the Jekyll and Hyde Syndrome Differs from Normal Mood Shifts

Those with the Jekyll and Hyde syndrome do not simply experience normal moods shifts and show different sides of themselves the way average people do. What sets people with a Jekyll and Hyde syndrome apart is:

- The fact that their mood shifts are far more frequent and severe than the average person's.
- In many cases, not only do their moods shift but their entire personalities change.
- Often, their sudden mood shifts include an element of abusiveness toward others.
- They seldom own up to or admit to their severe mood shifts or their dual personalities. In fact, some are not aware that they have such extreme mood shifts or that they have two distinctive personalities. Most will deny any change in their behavior and may even try to make their partners or others doubt their own perceptions regarding these mood shifts.
- Many Jekyll and Hydies are excellent liars who are extremely convincing and are experts in denial, distorting the truth, and shifting the blame.
- Their personality changes often represent deep conflicts within themselves (for example, the minister who is vehemently against adultery but has strong sexual urges he cannot control).
- Their personality shifts or dual personalities are often symptomatic of a personality disorder or are due to previous abuse

experiences. (Many people who suffer from the Jekyll and Hyde syndrome were abused in childhood, and many suffer from personality disorders because of it).

- Some who suffer from the Jekyll and Hyde Syndrome actually live double lives. They may be highly respected elected officials, philanthropists, or even members of the clergy who hide a dark side to their personality that causes them to act in ways that would be shocking and hurtful to those who hold them in high regard, or they may create dual identities so they can participate in activities that are unacceptable in normal society.

The Seven Types of Jekyll and Hydes

From my many years of experience working as a psychotherapist specializing in abuse, I have determined that there are seven distinct types of Jekyll and Hydes:

1. *The super nice/abusive person.* For most of you reading this book, this is the type of Jekyll and Hyde you are probably concerned about. This person can be loving and charming one minute and abusive the next. Most often, the abuse takes the form of criticism, insults, and name calling, but at times it can include physical abuse. The person is often apologetic once some time has passed and goes back to his usual loving self. Yet no matter how apologetic he is or how many promises he makes to stop being critical, before long he has once again slipped back into his abusive behavior.
2. *The unpredictable person.* You never know when this person will become upset, blow up, go on a rampage, become withdrawn and sullen, or completely change her mind about something. Living with this person has been described as “walking on eggshells” because this type of person is exquisitely sensitive, and you never know whether something you say or do will upset her. Often, it is nothing you have done or said, but something that went on in this person’s own mind that created the upset.

3. *The classic Jekyll and Hyde who truly lives a double life.* This person may be one type of person around his family and an entirely different one while away from them. For example, a hard working married man may appear in public to be the pinnacle of virtue, yet may be seeing other women or be involved with illegal activities. He may hold the position of a minister or a priest, or he may have been elected a mayor of a city or a senator of a state. He may be a philanthropist or a highly respected celebrity, and yet he has another life in which he goes against everything he stands for. Some people with this type of Jekyll and Hyde syndrome have set up separate identities, which includes going by different names or being married to more than one person.
4. *Someone whose personality radically changes when he or she drinks alcohol, takes drugs, or engages in other addictive activities.* Like Dr. Jekyll, whose transformation occurred after he took an elixir he created in his laboratory, this type of radical shift usually takes place only when the person is altered due to alcohol, drugs, gambling, and so on.
5. *The imposter.* This person deliberately tries to fool people into thinking he is something he is not. This can include pretending to be more concerned with the welfare of others or more successful than he is. He regularly lies, manipulates, and deceives others.
6. *Someone whose opinion of others fluctuates drastically.* This person tends to view people as either “all good” or “all bad.” When she views someone as “all bad,” she is unable to see any redeeming qualities in the person and feels justified in treating him poorly or rejecting him completely—even if he is her own child.
7. *Someone who changes dramatically when you challenge him or her in any way.* This person can be considerate and agreeable as long as things go his way or as long as he is in control. But if you don’t do as he wants, if you challenge him in any way, or if you dare contradict him, you will see a completely different person. He will become defensive, insulting, and cruel.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Is Someone You Know a Jekyll and Hyde?

The following questions will help you decide whether someone you know is a Jekyll and Hyde:

1. Do certain situations tend to cause this person to change personality or have sudden mood shifts?
2. Does this person change radically depending on whom he is around?
3. Does she seem to have a public personality that is very different from how she behaves in the privacy of the home?
4. Does he frequently contradict himself? Does he state one point of view or belief one time and the opposite point of view another time?
5. Does this person appear to be hypocritical? Does she strongly disapprove of a certain behavior in others while often being guilty of the same behavior?
6. Does he have a radically different perception of himself from the one others have of him?
7. Is she often perplexed by how others view her behavior?
8. Does he often forget that certain events occurred?
9. Does she deny that she behaved in certain ways, even though you or others are certain she did? Does she accuse you of making it up or of being crazy?
10. Does he change personalities or become radically different once he has had a few drinks or has taken recreational drugs?
11. Does this person have an investment in being seen as the pillar of the community or as an extremely religious person yet sometimes exhibits behavior that is considered unacceptable, sinful, or even criminal?
12. Does she have an asymmetrical face—meaning that one side of the face is radically different from the other side of the face?