



## Personality disorders are more than quirks

*By Ellen Waldman*

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I recently attended a Webinar presented by the Aging Life Care Association ([aginglifecare.org](http://aginglifecare.org)) which discussed personality disorders. These are not just “quirks” that everyone seems to have. Some examples of personality disorders are borderline, narcissistic, paranoid, antisocial, and obsessive-compulsive. Many times, these go undiagnosed and untreated, especially in older adults. These are very challenging behaviors for family and friends to understand and work with.

Here locally, through the Rogue Valley Council of Governments Senior and Disability Services, we actually have a behavioral health department and specialist, Sean Connolly. He’s been a specialist here for four years, and has been putting together some new programs you might be very interested in exploring. These programs are not specifically focused on the personality disorders mentioned, but on the more common situations that older adults might encounter. Here are my questions and Sean’s answers on this topic.

1. What is an older adult behavioral health specialist?

Behavioral health is a bit of an umbrella term that includes mental health, substance use/abuse, dementia, and sometimes abuse and domestic violence. Older adult behavioral health specialists are positions created by the State to serve specific geographic areas, and there are 24 of us serving the 36 counties in Oregon. We are tasked with providing support, education/training, and complex case consultations regarding older adults and adults with disabilities. We work closely with other local agencies, retirement communities, senior centers, etc., to prepare the community for an aging population.

2. What services does the behavioral health department provide to the community?

Since behavioral health ties in to so much of the human experience, almost all of our programs have a component of behavioral health. Specifically, though, our Program to Encourage Active and Rewarding Lives for Seniors (PEARLS) is designed to work with seniors who have mild to moderate depression. Our OPAL (Options for People to Address Loneliness) program serves those who are lonely or socially isolated. Finally, our Buried in Treasures workshop aims to assist people who exhibit hoarding behaviors to help them stop acquiring items and reduce clutter.

One of the reasons I contacted Sean was to get more information about a new series of videos he’s posted on YouTube called “A Senior Moment”. Some of the topics on these short videos are: the cost of caregiving; brain health; LGBTQ issues and several more.

I asked him about the Senior Moments videos.

I decided to create these short videos that give easily digestible information on a variety of older adult topics. I created the videos in response to “Zoom fatigue”. This is a feeling you get when you’ve been using video conferencing for work and other activities and you feel mentally drained and unfocused. The easiest way to view them is to go to [Youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and search for

“10 Tips for Brain Resilience.” Here’s a direct link: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8-SQtghWvpQ3roTxhdg3MA>.

The best way to get more information on any of these programs and services is to contact the Aging and Disability Resource Connection ([www.adrcoforegon.org](http://www.adrcoforegon.org); 855-673-2372). You can also contact Sean directly at [sconnolly@rvcog.org](mailto:sconnolly@rvcog.org); 541-423-1364.

Please keep in mind that as people age, any behavioral health issues they may have had as a younger adult do not simply disappear. If they also acquire any form of dementia, it can make things a whole lot more difficult. Knowing that this vital service is close at hand can offer some relief.