

MULTIPLICITY:

A language guide



MULTIPLICITY, ALSO KNOWN AS PLURALITY, IS THE EXPERIENCE OF HAVING TWO OR MORE SELVES SHARING ONE BODY. THESE ARE UMBRELLA TERMS DESCRIBING THE HOLISTIC EXPERIENCE, AND ARE NOT DIAGNOSTIC.

Selves



Also known as headmates or multiples, selves are the different identities that make up the body. Selves can have different genders, ages, preferences, behaviours and memories

System



A system is a combination of the selves who live in the body. The selves within a system are often aware of others sharing the body, but not always

Headspace



Headspace is the internal world that selves reside in. Often viewed as a houseware, people can share internal space, or have walls up that separate selves from each other

Fronting / Co-fronting



When a headmate is in control of the body, they are fronting. Co-fronting involves two or more selves being in control of the body at the same time

Co-conscious



Selves are co-conscious when they are aware of what is happening in the outside world but are not fronting, or in control. Communication can occur with the person who is fronting

Switching



Switching is the change of who is fronting. For some it can be an unnoticeable change to the outside world, while for others it is a difficult and private experience

MULTIPLICITY:

Factors that promote living well as a multiple self



MULTIPLICITY DESCRIBES THE EXPERIENCE OF HAVING TWO OR MORE SELVES SHARING ONE BODY. IT IS NOT A CLINICAL DIAGNOSIS.

NAVIGATING LIFE AS A MULTIPLE SELF IS OFTEN A JOURNEY, AND SOMETIMES INVOLVES SEEKING SUPPORT FROM LOVED ONES OR PROFESSIONALS.



1 Understanding

Understanding the self and the wider bodily system. For some this might be understanding how they became multiple, while for others it is about understanding each headmate that is sharing the body.

It is also important for the outside world to understand that people can live healthily and well with multiplicity.



2 Language

Having tailored language which accurately describes the multiplicity experience can be validating for many.

Lots of people who have multiplicity prefer to use non-clinical language for example headmates instead of alters.

3 Recognition

It is important for people who have multiplicity to recognise their experiences, and to understand how they can develop positive ways of being multiple.

This can be supported by loved ones or professionals who can help exploration of the inner world, and help people navigate the external world.



Zarah Eve

4 Regulation

Being able to communicate internally and develop positive internal relationships can help people to live well.

For some systems having structure to their weeks, knowing who is fronting when can be useful in navigating the external world.



MULTIPLICITY:

Recommendations to support people experiencing multiplicity in services



MULTIPLICITY IS THE HOLISTIC EXPERIENCE INVOLVING HAVING TWO OR MORE SELVES IN ONE BODY, EACH WITH THEIR OWN THOUGHTS, PREFERENCES, BEHAVIOURS, AND SENSE OF SELF

1

TAILORED LANGUAGE USE

- Use non-clinical language which aligns to people's experiences
- Understand and accept individual choices

BE OPEN

- Be open to multiple interpretations and conceptualisations of the self
- Ask the person what their preferences are for language, questions, and support

2

3

VALIDATION AND ACCEPTANCE

- Acknowledge selves within the system - non-fronting selves often feel unseen and forgotten

REASONS FOR SUPPORT SEEKING

- Often people want to live well as a multiple self, so may need support with internal structure, communication, and navigating the outside world

4

5

MULTIPLICITY IS NOT SOMETHING TO FIX

- If people are not experiencing distress or impairments in functioning, a clinical diagnosis is not needed

SPACE TO EXPLORE

- Provide people with a safe space to explore their internal world and develop internal relationships

6

7

TAILORED SUPPORT

- Some selves may be experiencing individual stresses or challenges which the system is not e.g., anxiety, loneliness. Work with both individuals and the bodily system

MULTIPLICITY:

Ways to support people experiencing multiplicity, and yourself



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Be open

It is a big decision for people to share their experiences with others. This means they likely trust you, and hope you will be accepting



Ask about headmates

You might engage with one or two selves most of the time, but stay mindful about the selves that are not fronting - they sometimes feel forgotten about

Ask the system

Most people with multiplicity are happy for you to ask questions about their experience - just be open and kind



Respect your limits

Take time if you need it to look after yourself. Speak to other support networks or seek more information



Take time to understand

Each headmate might act differently or have different memories. It is important to be understanding about the different selves sharing the body

