

# “How Do I Know If I’m Plural?”

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with input from the OtherConnect Discord Server

*Well, are you?*

Plurality is being ‘more than one’. That’s all that’s necessary to consider oneself plural- you just have to be having a ‘more than one’ experience. If the label gives your experience meaning, use it! If it doesn’t, don’t! Simple as that. Even if you are diagnosed with a dissociative disorder or are having ‘more than one’ experiences, you don’t have to identify as plural if it doesn't spark joy. Plurality is an opt-in label for those who experience being ‘more than one’ in some way.

Whether or not one is having a ‘more than one’ experience can sometimes be hard to parse out, however, so here is a handy little nonexhaustive checklist to look at that may help you judge this. These are not diagnostic criteria, to be clear, you do not need to experience all of the bullet points, or something from each category to be plural. Any one ‘more than one’ experience counts as enough to be plural. These are simply examples of common experiences that may help you conceptualize a experience you may be having as a ‘more than one’ experience that ‘counts’.

Here is an incomplete listing of other questioning lists, of which inspired this list;

- <https://subsystems.tumblr.com/post/644880910173503488/for-did-awareness-day-i-want-to-bring-awareness>
- <https://sarahkreece.com/2011/11/16/how-do-i-know-im-multiple/>
- <https://powertotheplurals.com/how-do-i-know-if-im-plural/>
- <http://www.karitas.net/blackbirds/layman/whatlike.html>
- <https://healthymultiplicity.com/loonybrain/Info/VickisDoesItWork.html>
- [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FtYqf6DPyaiAyE0Wqg7-WoUrNVTGOF0RmYIA6uyvt\\_o/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FtYqf6DPyaiAyE0Wqg7-WoUrNVTGOF0RmYIA6uyvt_o/edit) (small section in this)
- <https://meeresbande.tumblr.com/post/64782635501/am-i-multiple-what-to-do-when-you-think-you-might-be>

None of them fully suited our purposes of having a checklist to hand others with good examples of common experiences across all of the plurality spectrum, so this was created.

**NOTE:** We cannot diagnose you with a dissociative disorder, we are not psychologists, and no one can tell you if you are plural or not except for you. Only you can decide if you are plural or not.

Experiencing something on this list doesn’t mean you are for-sure plural or have a dissociative disorder, but these are experiences common to those who are or are outright ‘more than one’ experiences in of themselves.

## Some general 'More Than One' experiences:

### **'Hearing voices' that behave in 'person-like' ways, particularly if it's an 'internal thought voice':**

- Having 'your consciousness' talk to you in extended ways.
- Your internal dialogue is sometimes or always a conversation/dialogue in which one side you don't control.
- You have 'parts of yourself' or 'other selves' that you are in conversation with internally, with words or otherwise.
- You have 'racing thoughts' where your thought train is many internal dialogues at once.
- You may describe yourself as a 'collection of voices', or a 'collection of separate selves trying to be one person'.
- Having fictional characters you write about or think about a lot start having opinions and doing things you didn't intentionally make them do.
- Having a 'spiritual advisor' comment on things inside your head.
- Having any other kind of spiritual entity that cohabitates within your head.
- Having an 'imaginary friend' long into adulthood that acts autonomously some or all of the time.
- Having 'daydream characters' who act and speak autonomously, and express opinions you did not dictate.
- Otherwise having an internal part of your thoughtspace that behaves in person-like ways you cannot control, whether it speaks in words or otherwise.

### **'Identity disturbances' and having other entities 'take over' at any time:**

- Feeling like some other entity is moving your body or parts of your body for you or speaking for you.
- Feeling like you are possessed, or believing that you are, or that you are the possessor in that situation.
- Feeling like you weren't born in that body, that you simply appeared one day inside of it.
- Not feeling in control of what you are doing or like you are on autopilot.
- Feeling like you 'went somewhere else' for a while and someone else did things with the body.
- Feeling like you 'became a different person' for a while, or otherwise feeling like a different person sometimes.
- Acting and feeling different in different situations to the point that you genuinely believe different things at different times.
- Others telling you that you act very different sometimes or that you are expressing things that are 'out of character' sometimes.
- Having a hard time answering or being unable to answer the question 'Who am I as a person?'.
- Feeling like 'you' aren't a cohesive person and that you are made up of many different modes or people.

- Feeling like the you of a few years ago is not the same you that exists now in a very visceral sense more than a 'I changed and grew a lot since then' sense.
- Not feeling 'whole', feeling like a shattered piece of a person that should exist.
- General feelings that you are 'not yourself' sometimes.
- Only having some skills or ability to do a certain task well some of the time.
- Sometimes you identify very differently from how you usually do (ex, in age, gender, pronouns, sexuality, species, general 'internal self-image', opinions, likes/dislikes).
- Sometimes you have specific urges or thoughts that you usually do not.
- Sometimes you feel like the things on this list apply and sometimes you refuse to believe it or otherwise do not.
- You have contradicting thoughts, preferences, or opinions sometimes.
- You sometimes have different handwriting, accents, or mannerisms and attribute characteristics to these 'modes'.
- Feeling like you had a sudden stray thought or feeling that doesn't belong to you, feeling like some other entity is influencing your thoughts or feelings.
- Feeling like you have to put effort into being a cohesive person, or that you have to put effort into 'not being plural'.

#### **Other General Common Experiences:**

- Questioning or thinking you have a psychosis spectrum disorder BPD, ADHD, or C-PTSD because of some criteria matching, but not relating to the other criteria, or it not explaining your experiences fully.
- Questioning or thinking you are an age-regressor, but your regressed self some or all of the time seems quite different from you in thinking/pronoun preference/names/etc.
- Questioning or thinking you have a fluid/fluctuating orientation or gender, but you experience other details besides your gender or sexual orientation changing at the same time.
- Questioning or thinking you are otherkin/therian/fictionkin because you identify as a nonhuman or fictional entity and seem to experience 'shifts', but only identifying that way when you have a 'shift', or being otherkin/therian/fictionkin does not explain your experiences fully.
- Other people tell you your experiences with age-regression, gender/sexuality fluidity, or being otherkin/therian/fictionkin are extreme, or what other people describe feels less massive of a change than what you experience.
- You have previously been diagnosed with a disorder, but particularly BPD, ADHD, C-PTSD, a psychotic disorder, Epilepsy, or a mood disorder and treatment is not working, not working well, or making things worse.
- Feeling fascinated with plurality(media depictions or otherwise) and drawn to it without entirely knowing why, or because it 'feels right', fantasizing about discovering you are or becoming plural and feeling intense relief about it.
- Alternately, feeling fearful and deeply uncomfortable with it without knowing entirely why, and getting headaches or forgetful episodes when you think about the concept, but keeping wanting to learn more

## Things that may indicate you have disorderly plurality and/or a dissociative disorder:

### **Amnesia, general unreliable memory and forgetfulness:**

- Only remembering some things some of the time, especially past life events, adverse experiences, or personal information of you or others.
- Forgetting you have quit your job/graduated school/etc for extended periods of time before realizing. Especially if it happens more than once and not only just when you wake up and it's been years since you were going to that job/school/etc.
- Forgetting you have forgotten something major, especially if you have to have a revelation about remembering the thing more than once/find evidence that you had to do this.
- Not remembering certain important life events, positive or negative at all, like graduations, parties, natural disasters, other traumatic or stressful events, etc.
- Not remembering large swaths of your childhood or adolescence, beyond just normal levels of infantile amnesia.
- Not remembering what you did recently, how you got somewhere, conversations you had, possibly whole days of time.
- 'Coming to' in places without remembering how you got there or why you went there in the first place.
- People describe you as incredibly forgetful in some way.
- Finding evidence you have done something you don't remember doing (such as texts, internet history, or possessions) or people claiming you have done something you don't remember doing.
- Not remembering how you obtained certain possessions you have, particularly if you feel you would have remembered buying them.
- People claiming you have lied, but you don't think you have lied.
- Knowing that something occurred, like a traumatic event, but not knowing what you felt during that time or the exact details of it.
- Feeling like you can't place life events you have experienced on a timeline very well or at all.
- Feeling like 'time does not exist' to you or that you otherwise have a warped perception of time.
- Feeling like it's the first time you have done something even if you know logically you have done it a million times and have the memory of you doing it many times in the past.
- Feeling like you have the memory recall level most people have of dreams for most of your life, or that you have 'sparknotes memory'.
- Feeling like certain memories in the body do not belong to you or otherwise do not feel like yours.

**Dissociation; general disconnects between you, your sense of self, reality, and others around you:**

- Sometimes you just feel 'very strange' in a way you can't place.
- Sometimes feeling like the world around you is surreal or dreamlike or like it's in a fog or far away.
- Sometimes not recognizing your face in the mirror or your own body, feeling like it is 'wrong' or 'not you', otherwise finding mirrors uncomfortable, especially when this is only sometimes rather than all of the time.
- Sometimes feeling like Familiar places, objects, or people are unfamiliar or not like they are yours/people you know/places you have been.
- Sometimes it feels like watching things happen around you feels like watching a movie, like you are a bystander in life.
- Your surroundings or the people around you feel fake, unreal, or simulated.
- Sometimes you don't feel real, or like you are invisible or fake or do not exist.
- You feel like you are solely a conduit for experiencing things rather than a cohesive person with an identity some or all of the time.
- Feeling numbed to or detached from certain senses or body parts that you usually can feel just fine.
- Feeling detached from your thoughts, sense of self, or agency.
- Feeling like your emotions are happening 'over there' or to someone else.
- Feeling like you are floating outside your body or watching yourself/having an out of body experience.
- People claim you are 'spacey' or 'zoned out' a lot.
- Focusing on what is presently going on instead of your own internal world is difficult sometimes, you feel very 'zoned out' often.
- Feeling like your experience of having a body gives about as much of a disconnect as some people seem to have about first-person video games.
- Very easily being 'tranced', hypnotized, or 'zoned out' when exposed to stimuli frequently considered hypnotic or rhythmic.

**Physical sensations with no other known medical cause due to dissociation:**

- Visual or auditory distortions such as blurry vision, muffled sounds, tunnel vision, vision fading or cutting out in some way, rippling/swaying vision, sounds feeling like they are on slow motion.
- Feeling dizzy, lightheaded, or nauseous frequently.
- Getting 'head pressures' or headaches.
- Finding it hard to move or becoming catatonic or paralyzed, partially or totally sometimes, sometimes with accompanied fatigue or sleepiness.
- High tolerance for pain/being able to block out or not notice pain, even at high levels.
- Feeling physical pain when nothing is physically wrong.
- Loss of physical sensations like sight, hearing, speech, or feelings of hunger.
- Nonepileptic seizures of any kind.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Check with a medical professional to eliminate things such as a gas leak in your house, sleep or food deprivation, heavy metal poisoning, other physical medical issues or drug use if you are experiencing any physical symptom above. It is important to rule out other causes for these, as these other causes of symptoms can be life threatening.

**Other potentially disorderly 'more than one' experiences:**

- The numbers in your system have little stability, especially if you are under stress.
- Poor communication in the system, with some or all headmates being affected.
- Poor memory sharing in the system, with some or all headmates being affected.
- Poor control over switching, with some or all headmates being affected.
- The vast number of 'front triggers' for those in the system are negative and upsetting, especially if front triggers are the only way for your system to switch with any kind of ease or at all.
- Specific headmates have specific mental health issues you don't seem to, particularly if they are stuck on a past trauma that you are not or have PTSD or C-PTSD symptoms.
- Specific headmates keep doing or saying things that scare, harm, or otherwise distress you or others in the system.
- Specific headmates lash out at or try to harm the body, others around you, or your possessions.
- General getting along difficulties and finding it hard to make cooperative decisions.
- Frequent identity confusion, episodes of not knowing who you are, or feeling like you are a combination of people in the system in an unpleasant way. Feeling 'blurry' often.
- Fluctuations in communication, memory sharing, switching control, etc that coincide with specific life events.
- Any of your experiences with things mentioned anywhere in this document are making your life difficult in any way or otherwise distressing you.

**Tertiary/comorbid conditions you may also have alongside being Plural and/or having a Dissociative Disorder:**

- Neurodevelopmental disorders like ADHD or Autism
- PTSD or C-PTSD
- Personality Disorders, particularly BPD
- Psychotic Spectrum disorders
- Mood Disorders like Bipolar or Depression
- Anxiety Disorders
- Maladaptive Daydreaming
- Substance Abuse Disorders
- Eating Disorders
- Sleep Disorders
- Physical disabilities/neurological conditions such as Epilepsy, Autoimmune Disorders, IBS, etc

“What if I’m faking?”

**You can't fake on accident.** Faking requires intentional, deliberate intention to fake something. Otherwise it's not faking. You can be mistaken, but you cannot fake. If you feel like you could be mistaken, what things would you otherwise explain your experiences with?

**You are not taking any kind of finite resource to identify as plural or read plural resources.** If you got a dissociative specialty therapist and are going to therapy, then you probably do need that help. It's not a waste to help you. It's not a waste to identify in a way that makes you happier.

**Denial is extremely common even in those who have been professionally diagnosed for years.** Pretty much everyone doubts themselves from time to time, even systems who are fully out and have been in the community for years. It shouldn't be used as indication one is or is not plural.

“So I might be plural, but I’m not sure yet, how can I be sure?”

**Some things that aren't a yes/no, but answering yes to them is further weight in your favor of being plural:**

- Have your ‘more than one’ experiences been going on a long time? Do they predate hearing about this community?
- Does this framework make sense for your experiences? Does it help you to identify as plural?
- What happens if you consider the idea you are not plural? Are there other entities that object to this? Does internal stress intensify? Do you function worse?
- Does another framework regarding your identity fit you better and explain all of your experiences? (ex- age regression, therianthropy, psychosis, another DD that doesn't involve headmates, bipolar, BPD, genderfluidity, etc)
- What do the others in your head think is going on? Do they have opinions about this?

“I’m still not sure, how can I get evidence the headmates are really there?”

- Keep a journal and log your experiences in this vein, such as identity changes from day to day, known memory trouble, any voice hearing, and other experiences.
- For a bit treat yourself as really plural, give names to your ‘alternate states’ or ‘voices’ and start treating them like other people. Does it make things better? Do they communicate back? Does how you exist make more sense by doing this? You have your answer.
- Leave physical notes (such as in your phone, in a journal, or sticky notes in your belongings) and see if you get responses that can't be from another external person back.
- Try to communicate or otherwise talk to the possible headmates internally, if you get consistent personlike responses then they are there. Be aware treating something like it is there often enough will make it real and is how intentionally created headmates are made.
- If you are experiencing distressing or debilitating symptoms try to visit a therapist licensed in dissociation and they may be able to help you determine if you have a dissociative disorder.

“Is my imaginary friend not so imaginary?”

See this external link for ways to test:

<https://sophieinwonderland.tumblr.com/post/668880775946567680/how-do-i-know-if-my-imaginary-friend-is-sentient>

“Ok I’ve been convinced, what do I do now?”

- First, it is important to not panic. Everything is exactly as it was before this moment, but now you know the truth. The only thing new is a word for what you are experiencing.
- Ensure you are safe in your general life currently. If you are currently in a dangerous or stressful situation it may be best to focus on getting you out of it first.
- It is common to become more symptomatic when you first become aware. This is both because you are finally noticing things that have been happening all along, and because you and your system are not unconsciously masking anymore. Be prepared for this.
- If you are experiencing distress because of your plurality/dissociative traits, prioritize securing a therapist if its viable for you who may be able to help you with your symptoms.
- Try to discover who is in your system and what their needs and wants are- you may have to establish communication in some form first.
- If any headmates are traumatized or have other mental health issues, work with them to help improve those.
- Establish ground rules regarding how the system is to behave and make sure every headmate knows them and agrees to them.
- Work on improving your system skills through practice, such as communication, memory sharing, and switching at will until you achieve any goals you have.
- Discover and implement feasible outlets for your headmates to engage with the world in ways that you can all feel comfortable with.
- Look into more plural communities or resources who can answer your questions and help you, especially if you don't have access to a therapist.

**More tips for new systems:**

- Next it is important to know **its ok to be plural**. You are allowed to be plural. This is not something shameful, or barred to you. If this is your experience, you belong here.
- **Don't feel pressured to know everything about your system right away**, many systems go years without knowing things about their system, or may never know anything. Many people will have the understanding they currently have change over time.
- Know **its ok to use whatever language and frameworks you want to use** to understand or express your plurality. You do not have to identify with the popular ones.
- Know that **any recovery path is valid**, you do not have to choose to try for a specific one, nor do you have to choose what you want to do right away.
- **The community is like any other, it is not a guaranteed safe space and filled with trolls and drama**, especially community-specific drama and gatekeeping. Exercise some level of caution when interacting within it.



“I’m not plural, what if I want to be?”

That’s fine! There is nothing wrong with this! You are not minimizing a disorder, and you are not appropriating. Plurality is not a medical label and very much includes intentionally created/formed/summoned headmates and has historically done so. Intentional creation/formation of headmates is something that can happen.

**If you want to do so and are fully aware of what you are getting into and that it is a long term serious commitment, we encourage you to do so.**

Check out Tulpamancy, Soulbonding, or Daemonism for this.

Some recommended community resource pages for newly discovered plural folks:

- <https://morethanone.info/> <- Basic FAQ about plurality
- <https://freyasspirit.com/plurality-playbook/> <- In-depth FAQ for employers about plurality
- <http://www.karitas.net/blackbirds/layman/> <- Older FAQ about plurality, some sections may be outdated
- <http://healthymultiplicity.com/> <- One of the oldest plural sites still updating, general resources
- <https://kinhost.org/> <- Large self-help site
- <https://di.org.au/> <- More medically-focused resource site
- <https://endogenichub.weebly.com/> <- General resource site for non-trauma based plurality
- <https://daemonpage.com//> <- Site about Dæmonism
- [https://soulbonding.tripod.com/soulbonding\\_intro.htm](https://soulbonding.tripod.com/soulbonding_intro.htm) <- site about Soulbonding
- <https://tulpa.io/> <- Site about tulpamancy

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