

TABLE 3-4 *Misdiagnosis and How to Avoid This*

Disorder That's Been Diagnosed Instead of BDD	Brief Definition*	Why BDD May Be Misdiagnosed As Another Disorder	How to Avoid Misdiagnosing BDD
Major depression	Depressed mood, decreased interest, and other symptoms such as sleep and appetite disturbance for at least several weeks at a time	Depressive symptoms that coexist with BDD are diagnosed, but BDD is missed; or BDD symptoms are considered a symptom of depression, and BDD isn't diagnosed. In my clinical experience, this is the most common diagnostic error.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for BDD in people with depression. • Don't assume that appearance concerns are simply a symptom of depression. • Diagnose BDD if it's present.
Social phobia (Social anxiety disorder)	An excessive fear of social or performance situations due to fear of doing something embarrassing or humiliating	BDD often causes social anxiety, withdrawal, and avoidance; the social anxiety may be quite noticeable, but the BDD may be kept secret. This can lead to misdiagnosis of BDD as social phobia or avoidant personality disorder.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't assume that social anxiety or avoidance is just due to social phobia. • If social anxiety or avoidance are largely due to BDD, BDD rather than social phobia should be diagnosed. • Some people have both BDD and social phobia, in which case both diagnoses should be given.
Agoraphobia	Anxiety about being in places or situations from which escape might be difficult or embarrassing, or in which help might not be available, in the event of having a panic attack or panic-like symptoms	Because some people with BDD think they're too ugly to leave their house, or because they fear that others are taking special notice of their perceived defect, they may feel anxious in and avoid a variety of situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with features of agoraphobia should be asked whether they're anxious in and avoid situations because of how they look. If the avoidance is largely because of BDD, BDD should be diagnosed instead of agoraphobia.

(continued)

TABLE 3-4 *Misdiagnosis and How to Avoid This (continued)*

Disorder That's Been Diagnosed Instead of BDD	Brief Definition*	Why BDD May Be Misdiagnosed As Another Disorder	How to Avoid Misdiagnosing BDD
Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)	Obsessions and/or compulsions that are time-consuming, distressing, or impairing	Because BDD and OCD are both characterized by obsessions and repetitive behaviors, BDD can be misdiagnosed as OCD.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the obsessions (preoccupations) and behaviors focus on physical appearance, BDD is the more accurate diagnosis.
Panic disorder	Recurring panic attacks that come out of the blue followed by concern about having more attacks, worry about the consequences of the attacks, or a significant change in behavior related to the attacks	People with BDD can have panic attacks as a result of BDD. They may feel intensely uncomfortable and fearful—and experience physical symptoms, such as a pounding heart, sweating, or trouble breathing—because they're so upset by how they look. These attacks of extreme anxiety can be triggered by the mirror or thinking someone is staring at the person or mocking their looks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To receive a diagnosis of panic disorder, the panic attacks must come “out of the blue”—not triggered by BDD or another disorder. If BDD is the cause of panic attacks, BDD should be diagnosed. Panic attacks maybe be the initial clue that leads to the diagnosis of BDD.
Trichotillomania	Recurring hair pulling, resulting in noticeable hair loss	Some people with BDD remove their hair (body, head, or facial hair) to try to improve their appearance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the purpose of the hair pulling is to improve a perceived “defect” in appearance, BDD should be diagnosed rather than trichotillomania.

Disorder That's Been Diagnosed Instead of BDD	Brief Definition*	Why BDD May Be Misdiagnosed As Another Disorder	How to Avoid Misdiagnosing BDD
Schizophrenia	Symptoms such as delusions, hallucinations, disorganized speech; behavior that is grossly disorganized or abnormal	BDD beliefs are often delusional, and many people with BDD believe other people take special notice of them (referential thinking) (see Chapter 5 for more information).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the delusional beliefs and referential thinking are limited to appearance, and there are no other symptoms of schizophrenia, BDD is the more accurate diagnosis.