

# **Absolute/Berserker Shifts**

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**First Written:** November 7, 2025

**Last Edited:** November 7, 2025

**Original Post:** ([Tumblr](#))

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## **Content Warnings:**

- Mentions and discussion of (potential) delusions and hallucinations.
  - Some content possibly may come across as reality checking (albeit of my own experiences), to some.
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We don't hear much talk about berserker shifts, probably due to the stigma and from what we've seen in some spaces, a somewhat general consensus of them being a thing of myth or attention seeking. Or, being unable to happen to "true otherkind", only occurring within mental illness—though that take is one we haven't seen in recent years, in more accepting spaces. It's nice to see a little bit of a shift toward accepting otherkinity that *does* stem from mental illness, honestly! But yeah, I *am* psychotic as well as a member of a dissociative system, and I think even if my shifting is a result of those things, it's still an alterhuman experience worth discussing. I prefer the term "absolute shift" as opposed to "berserker shift", so i'll be using that for the rest of this.

For context of my identity, I'm a fictive of Katsuki Bakugo (My Hero Academia). My fictotypes are Satoru Gojo (Jujutsu Kaisen), Tanjiro Kamado (Demon Slayer), and Great Izuchi (Monster Hunter). I'm also dragonkin, and my dragon self is a small semi-aquatic wyvern, about the size of a large chicken. I've been in my system for over a year and I've done a lot of looking into my own identity to figure all this stuff out. I suppose even this is my own way of publicly dissecting my absolute shifting experience to reflect on it better myself.

Absolute shifts, as my preferred name for them implies, are when your mental state and perception of self becomes absolutely (or almost absolutely) that of the identity you're shifting to. In therians and other animalfolk, this usually involves the loss of humanlike thinking skills. Essentially, a super strong mental shift, often accompanied by phantom shifts and shifts in your perception of your body entirely. It's usually talked about in the context of animalfolk actually, but that's not my whole experience. I have shifts that embody my fictional, human(oid) identities as well. I think I'm one of the only guys in-system who gets them, and I'm sure I've talked about this before here but I figured.. why not do it again, in one easy to access document?

They're usually talked about as being very disorienting, confusing or even terrifying. Sometimes they can be freeing and a wonderful experience. For me, the confusion is very real if I still have

some connection to my current body and reality. But if I'm fully in the shift... I suppose it feels nice to feel fully and wholly like *me* for even a little while.

It usually happens during certain situations that sort of act as triggers for memories. If I was doing an activity I would be more familiar with doing in one of my kintypes lives, or if I'm in an environment they'd feel comfortable in, or if something reminds me a little too strongly of home, I'm more likely to have an absolute shift. I've never been able to voluntarily trigger them, though I also haven't tried in all honesty. Though I figure I *could* probably figure out the triggers and force one to occur myself if I wanted to.

For myself to experience an absolute shift of my Tanjiro kintype, I'll often have shifts triggered by going out walking somewhere, usually specifically through nature. Sometimes, just getting started on a longer walk and preparing myself mentally to walk for a long while is enough to cause a shift. As Tanjiro, I had to walk long distances almost daily, it was a regular part of my routine—as natural as eating food a little while after waking up, or putting on different clothes for the day. I suppose that's why walking as a concept is so linked to that identity. Walking between towns and up mountains and through forests was just what I routinely did—that was home, for me. Tanjiro is the identity most closely linked to my absolute shifts.

For my Bakugo identity, it's less easy to predict. Sometimes I'll just be cooking, as I used to love doing often back home. Sometimes I'll be hanging around in town—though I've found I tend to shift more often when in the city as opposed to the town I currently live in. Sometimes I might be only chatting to a friend, or just waking up in the morning... And I'll suddenly be wholly, unfilteredly me for a moment. Sometimes when I end up doing some sort of competitive game I'll get shifty, but that's less reliable than just mundane life activities. I think as Bakugo, I valued the small things more than I tried to let on. Little daily things that you can focus on instead of the big picture—those things kept me grounded when the world felt like it was falling apart around me. So, maybe that's why my triggers for that 'type seem to be so mundane.

I've only had absolute shifts of my Great Izuchi kintype once or twice, so I don't really have reliable triggers I know of. The only times I remember clearly are when I was just thinking about the identity itself, thinking about my phantom shifts, how my body looked in that form, my pack I led and commanded. I would have once assumed absolute shifts of this kintype to be incredibly animalistic, but honestly I retain a lot of my thinking and problem solving skills. My thoughts are more based in logic, instinct, and survival than they are in any semblance of emotions or desire beyond basic needs, but... There's real tactical thought there. Which is pretty interesting, I suppose I *would* have needed *some* sense of logic in order to have a pack I commanded in the ways that I did.

It's actually hard to tell if I've had an absolute shift of Gojo at all. I have times where I feel *close*, but I don't think I've fully fallen into that identity yet. I'd have no idea what the triggers would even be. I'm constantly in a state of mental shift, on a sliding scale between “feeling pretty Gojo right now” to “feeling so damn Gojo right now”—I've just never been able to tell the line between “I *feel* so very Gojo right now” and “I am *absolutely, entirely* Gojo right now”.

When shifts happen, it feels like something flips like a switch in my head. After the fact, at least. I normally don't realise I've slipped into a shift, it's more like something I realise was there only after I'm "back to reality". I mentally become entirely what my kintypes are. Thoughts, feelings, instincts, desires, perception of self, memories and all. My body feels like it would look like my 'types, even though I don't literally hallucinate any change in my form—I'm actually pretty glad I've never had an absolute shift in front of a mirror. My thoughts mirror how I'd think in canon, I act as if I am entirely physically and mentally my 'type. I might be confused about where the hell I am and not recognise my surroundings, or I might just *assume* I'm where I should be and not question or even realise my surroundings aren't the home I remember.

Usually, it lasts between 5 seconds to 30 seconds, but I've had some as short as a quick flash of "what the hell??", and some as long as a minute or so. It's actually really hard to decide whether the quick short ones would count more as absolute shifts, or whether they'd more so count as flashbacks or memories. Maybe in a way, that's what absolute shifts *are* in essence, an emotional and mental flashback episode, just not usually based around trauma (at least for myself) but instead, alterhuman identities.

The mindset it puts me in also tends to differ, like it took my identity from different points in time and just picked one time point for me to currently embody. For example, sometimes I'm in the Tanjiro mindset where the weight on my back (actually my real this-world bag I carry with me) is my sister I had to carry around in a box on my back for the longest time. I just assume that's what the weight is even if it's in the wrong place and don't question it further for the duration of the shift. Sometimes though, I start walking, realise the weight on my back isn't as heavy as usual so she must not be there, and for a second get scared about where my sister went. Did I lose her? Is she okay? Where did she go? Did I screw up? Other times I don't think about her at all and assume she's walking alongside me, or I've left her in the care of someone else. None of this seems to depend on whether I actually have weight on my back or not, it just seems random.

Usually, for either my Bakugo or Tanjiro shifts, I feel like I'm *obviously* still in Japan. Why would I be in any other country? That would make no sense! But during these shifts I also don't tend to even notice how different the architecture is, or that the trees are very different, or that the streets and people are nowhere near the same. I don't realise that I personally *know* these streets aren't in Japan until the shift ends. I just keep walking, fully feeling like I'm back home anyway—I don't even stop to *think* or question where I am or if anything seems off. Sometimes, though much more rarely when out and about, I do realise that the architecture and flora and fauna aren't what I recognise. This causes a brief moment of confusion, sometimes panic and "oh god, where the fuck am I??", and I snap back to reality. I take a little while to readjust when that happens, but it's mostly just taking time to calm the body down so I can continue on my walk.

Though most of the time I don't notice anything is off with my surroundings or my body, I've had moments where I wake up in the morning and am immediately in a Bakugo absolute shift, which lends to the most confusion I tend to get from absolute shifting. I'll freak out for a moment, not recognising that I'm in my own room, in my own van, in my own bed. I'll start thinking thoughts

like “is this another hostage situation?”, “what do they want with me?”, “do the others know where I am?”, “did I do something and get knocked out?”, “do I need backup?”--a bunch of other things that would make sense for me to think if I were back there in my body and woke up in an unfamiliar location. During shifts, I’ve wondered why my body hurts so much (that’s called chronic pain, me), wondered what the hell type of clothes I’m wearing (...my own clothes!), wondered why there’s a random cat on my bed (that is MY cat, he’s on my bed because he is MY CAT)... In shifts like that I spend a lot of time questioning a lot of different things that are normal and mundane, to my this-world brain. Luckily, usually the morning shifts die down pretty quickly though, so then I ground myself, get up, and go about my day.

I’ve never been confused about my location while in an Izuchi shift, somehow. Maybe I just don’t think about it, my sights are more set on where my next meal is going to come from. I don’t think that identity seems to care too much about where it is at all—I’ve never made an assumption about where I am, I’ve never decided that my surroundings are wrong, I’ve never taken note of anything around me except brief “what is that—I’ll avoid that” thoughts about cars and people. I just.. Carry on with my walk as if it’s all normal. Which leads me to just continue walking in whatever direction I’d already started off in. Honestly I’m glad I don’t get disoriented or confused while in an absolute Izuchi shift, I feel like I’d end up doing something wholly embarrassing if I did—we don’t need to make monster rampages a this-world reality. The main thing I’ve noticed with those shifts, is that I tend to wonder and worry where my pack is. That’s the most disorienting thing about it. Did they get picked off without me noticing by another monster? What could have even slipped my notice like that without making a sound? Where are they? Are they alive? But in the end, I don’t even end up too distressed by it. I search for them in my surroundings, but I also just keep walking—I mean, what is there for a creature to do other than keep pushing forward? If they died, they died, and that can’t be changed. So I carry on.

As disorienting as they are though, they’re also kind of euphoric sometimes. I don’t notice any change or euphoria while I’m in them, as I don’t even realise I’m shifting while I’m in one. But once I’m back to normal, I like to savour that feeling. The feeling of being so intrinsically myself for a moment, so much so that species and identity dysphoria isn’t even a background thought in my mind. The feeling of being *me* without any semblance of “but this is not my body, not my home”. I struggle with dysphoria relating to my looks, my skills or lack thereof, my environment, culture and the country I live in, and honestly everything I have in my noemata of my ‘types. So it’s really, really nice to be able to at least have little windows of relief into how things used to be. Little moments of (mostly) peace scattered about here and there, even if they’re often disorienting as well. It’s freeing. A breath of fresh air that carries the scent of nostalgia. As much as they can be upsetting sometimes, I don’t think I’d trade them off for anything short of the ability to actually *be* home for a while again. The feeling is too important to me to miss out on.

I’m not entirely sure what causes my absolute shifts. I mean, is anyone sure what causes phantom, dream, or mental shifts? What do they stem from aside from “I’m this thing in the wrong body”? Do people normally have an answer for that? I don’t think we’ve ever heard people discuss the mechanisms of *how* they happen, what makes them tick, or how the brain produces them. Well, I suppose outside of spirituality type things I don’t generally subscribe to the idea of. But I like thinking about stuff in depth, so I’ve thought about my shifts like that from

time to time. I'm psychotic (schizoaffective specifically), and we have DID, so I honestly wonder if absolute shifts could be products of those more so than my identities themselves. Of course they're still a part of my 'types, but alterhumanity and neurodivergency can intersect in strange ways.

I feel like my absolute shifts could be a result of:

- As mentioned earlier, maybe they're flashback states. Not in a sense of how you see them presented in cartoons where you're suddenly literally hallucinating everything around you to be someplace or sometime else, but in the sense of an emotional flashback. Those are usually related to trauma, but hell, phantom shifts are usually related to amputees and we get those anyway. They feel similar in concept to me as a guy who has had emotional flashbacks, though they're not exactly the same.
- My psychosis, with myself entering brief delusional periods of time where I "revert" into my 'types. This would be a neat and tidy explanation for why my brain straight up ignores the fact I can see that I'm not home, yet still I fully feel like I am. Though this feels a little strange—we *do* hallucinate, yet I've never hallucinated during an absolute shift. The lack of hallucinations is sometimes what snaps me out of the shift itself. You can have delusions without hallucinations and vice versa, it just feels a little strange.
- Maybe it's just some product of dissociation. Feeling a disconnect with your surroundings is pretty common when dissociating, as is a disconnect from yourself.. So maybe it's some combination of feeling disconnected from my *current* self, and my surroundings. Or some other weird thing that comes with any way dissociation can present.
- Maybe brains are just weird and there's no concrete *why* about it for me. Brains do a lot of things, a lot of them understudied. Maybe its the brain's way of going "oh right, you're also this guy" or something. Maybe it's just a freak occurrence that seems to mostly happen to me specifically, and not others in my system—something with my own consciousness specifically. Maybe it's related to my origin as a headmate that formed from a dream? Maybe my origin as a literal "character" in our dream becoming sentient and a full meadmate made my perception of self more pliable.
- Or, maybe some spiritual thing that I don't really think about is true and some other-realm stuff is happening. Something with my soul or whatever I may have—do headmates formed from dreams have souls? I guess that would be something a more spiritual person in my system would get into, some other time haha. I wouldn't know what most spiritual origin related things could be, but, hey. Lots of things are possible, I suppose! I'm open to having a think about most.

Regardless of where it comes from, I don't mind my shifts. They're disorienting a lot of the time, but they haven't caused any real damage. Luckily for me, they seem pretty unlikely to, judging by all my experiences with them. Whether they come from my neurodivergency, something more spiritual, or are just an innate part of my alterhumanity separate from the psychological/metaphysical binary, they're a part of me and a part of my life. They're a part of my alterhumanity. They're something I live with and have learned to deal with in a way that's as efficient as possible, and they also give me euphoria that I value immensely. Absolute shifts are

something that holds a lot of stigma and scepticism as a topic, something that people often advise you seek medical help for. But I've had medical help for my disorders, it's changed nothing about my shifts. Just like any other facet of my alterhumanity, they're a regular part of my life. I don't really see a point in trying to change that.