

MENTAL ILLNESS: WHAT IS IT?

Presented by Deborah J. Hunter, BS, BHCMI

MAJOR MENTAL ILLNESSES IN A NUTSHELL

Bipolar disorder causes dramatic highs and lows in a person's mood, energy and ability to think clearly.

Depression is more than just feeling sad or going through a rough patch; it's a serious mental health condition that requires understanding and treatment.

Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is characterized by severe, unstable mood swings, impulsivity and instability, poor self-image and stormy relationships.

Schizoaffective disorder is characterized primarily by symptoms of schizophrenia, such as hallucinations or delusions, and symptoms of a mood disorder, such as depressive or manic episodes.

Schizophrenia causes people to lose touch with reality, often in the form of hallucinations, delusions and extremely disordered thinking and behavior.

Each illness has its own symptoms, but common signs of mental illness in adults and adolescents can include the following which may manifest in an inability to carry out daily activities or handle daily problems and stress:

- ✓ Excessive worrying or fear
- ✓ Feeling excessively sad or low
- ✓ Confused thinking or problems concentrating and learning
- ✓ Extreme mood changes, including uncontrollable "highs" or feelings of euphoria
- ✓ Prolonged or strong feelings of irritability or anger
- ✓ Avoiding friends and social activities
- ✓ Difficulties understanding or relating to other people
- ✓ Multiple physical ailments without obvious causes
 - Such as headaches, stomach aches, vague and ongoing "aches and pains"
- ✓ Changes in
 - Sleeping habits or feeling tired and low energy
 - Eating habits such as increased hunger or lack of appetite
 - Sex drive
- ✓ Difficulty perceiving reality
 - Delusions or hallucinations, in which a person experiences and senses things that don't exist in objective reality
- ✓ Inability to perceive changes in one's own feelings, behavior or personality
 - Lack of insight
 - [Anosognosia](#)
- ✓ Abuse of substances like alcohol or drugs
- ✓ Thinking about suicide

POINTS TO REMEMBER | INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY vs MENTAL ILLNESS

Some people with intellectual disability may also experience mental illness, but the two conditions are very different.

- ✓ Be respectful.
- ✓ Respect their space.
- ✓ Do not assume people with a serious mental illness are lacking in intelligence.
- ✓ Do not pass them on to another person just to get rid of them.
- ✓ Beware of interrupting.
- ✓ Listen actively.
- ✓ Set Boundaries.
- ✓ Be patient.
- ✓ Don't "over-explain" by giving too much information at one time.
- ✓ Be careful of overusing the word "you".
- ✓ Remember that technical problems involve emotional reactions.
- ✓ Mental illness has no racial, economic or intellectual boundaries.
- ✓ Offer resources.
- ✓ It is not up to you to diagnose your customers.
- ✓ Breathe!

SELECTED RESOURCES ON MENTAL ILLNESS

- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) nami.org and namitulsa.org
- Mental Health Association Oklahoma mhaok.org
- Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services ok.gov/odmhsas
- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) nimh.nih.gov
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) samhsa.gov
- Statistics on Homelessness endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness-report

MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS CONNECTIONS | LOCAL & NATIONAL

- COPES [Community Outreach Psychiatric Emergency Services]
 - 918.744.4800
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline | Talk to Someone Now
 - ✓ Free & Confidential | suicidepreventionlifeline.org/talk-to-someone-now
 - 1.800.273.8255
[1.800.273.TALK]
 - Text | 1.800.799.4TTY
[1.800.799.4889]
 - LGBT Youth Suicide Hotline
 - 1.866.488.7367
 - Suicide Hotline [Spanish]
 - 1.888.628.9454
 - Military Veterans Crisis Line [suicide]
 - 1-800-273-8255
 - Text 838255