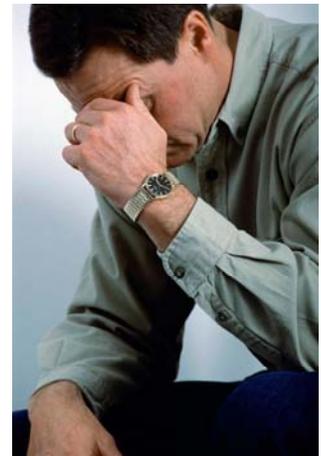


A QUICK GUIDE TO MENTAL ILLNESS

A person's mental health describes the ability of an individual to interact with others and within their environment in ways that promote their well being, enhance their personal development and allow them to achieve personal goals. Having a mental illness is when a person's thoughts, feelings and behavior cause them or others distress. Such examples include schizophrenia, depression, bi-polar disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder and anxiety disorders.

This quick guide is intended to give you information if you or someone you love is affected by mental illness, giving you signs of what to look for, how to respond and who to call for help.



Mood Disorders

- Affecting approximately 10% of the population
- Those with mood disorders experience the "highs" and "lows" in life with greater intensity and for longer periods of time.
- Depression is most common mood disorders.
- Manic depression – those that have periods of depression and periods of unusually "high" or elated feelings. The "highs" get out of hand and person may behave recklessly.

Mood disorders include:

Depression: feelings of worthlessness, self-blame, sadness, disappointment and emptiness that last for an extended time and interfere with one's work or social interaction.

Post Partum Depression:

intense and irrational feelings of fear. The mother may fear losing her mind or that she is unfit to be a mother.

Children & Depression:

mindset that no one else feels the same way or that no one will understand their problems. Often feel everyone dislikes them.

Bipolar Disorder: manic-depressive disorder with alternating mood swings from emotional highs (mania) to lows (depression)

Seasonal Affective Disorder

(SADs): weather affecting people's moods. Shortened days of autumn begin a clinical depression lasting until spring.

Anxiety Disorders

- Those suffering from anxiety disorder feel intense feelings of fright and distress for no obvious reason.
- The condition can interfere with relationships with family, friends and colleagues.
- Anxiety disorders are the most common of all mental health problems.
- It is estimated they affect about 1 in 10 people, with more prevalence amongst women than men. These disorders can affect children as well as adults.
- Anxiety disorders are illnesses. They can be diagnosed and can be treated.

Anxiety disorders include:

Panic Disorder: expressed in panic attacks that occur without warning and accompanied by sudden feelings of terror.

Social Phobia: paralyzing, irrational self-consciousness about social situations

Specific Phobias: those suffering from a specific phobia are overwhelmed by unreasonable fears that they are unable to control.

Post-Traumatic Stress: reliving a terrifying experience that caused or threatened serious physical harm

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: recurring thoughts or impulses that people try to get rid of by ignoring, suppressing, performing rituals or repetitive behaviour.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder: worry or tension not connected to any one situation and lasting at least six months.

Eating Disorders

- Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of all mental illnesses. 10 to 20 % of those suffering will die from complications.
- These disorders are not about food. They are a way of coping with deeper problems that the person finds too painful or difficult to deal with directly.
- Someone with an eating disorder will use their weight as the prime focus of their life. They use this preoccupation to displace painful emotions or situations that are the heart of the problem.



Eating disorders include:

Anorexia nervosa: characterized by severe weight loss due to extreme food reduction.

Bulimia nervosa: frequent fluctuations in weight due to periods of uncontrollable binge eating, followed by purging.

Binge-eating disorder: or compulsive eating is often triggered by chronic dieting and involves periods of overeating, often in secret

Eating disorders signal difficulties with identity, self-concept and self-esteem. Help is available.

Suicide

- A suicidal person is feeling so much pain that they can see no other option.
- They feel they are a burden to others and in desperation see death as a way to escape their overwhelming pain and anguish.



www.suicideinfo.ca

Psychosis

- Psychosis is a medical condition that affects the brain.
- Psychosis can be treated.
- A person with psychosis experiences loss of contact with reality, characterized by changes in their way of thinking, believing, perceiving and/or behaving
- A person suffering from psychosis can be very disoriented or distressed and without treatment the disorder can be overwhelming.

Schizophrenia

- Strikes most often between the ages of 10 to 30 years of age and affects an estimated one person in every hundred. This is youth's greatest disabler.
- Schizophrenia will often start slowly and once taking hold will appear in cycles of remission and relapse.
- A person in remission will seem unaffected and can more or less function in society. However during relapse a person may experience one or all of these: delusions and/or hallucinations, lack of motivation, social withdrawal and/or thought disorders.

Sometimes the need for help is obvious and getting it is as simple as picking up the phone. At other times it can be hard to admit help is needed. This is especially true when your emotions are involved.

You are not alone. There are people who want to listen and support you. Call them.



CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE POUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE

Canadian Mental Health Association

www.cmha.ca

1-416-977-5580



1-866-531-2600

In Extreme Emergency

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