

Disability awareness

Psychosis and Schizophrenia

Psychosis or a psychotic episode is when someone perceives or interprets things differently from those around them and seems to have lost touch with reality. People can experience psychosis for a wide variety of reasons including mental health conditions such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder but can also be caused by drug use, high temperature, brain injury or extreme stress. Having a psychotic episode does not necessarily mean someone will develop schizophrenia. Some people only ever experience one episode of psychosis.

Schizophrenia is a long-term condition where someone experiences range of psychological symptoms over more than six months. These symptoms can be categorised as 'positive' or 'negative'.

Positive symptoms are not beneficial – you can think of them as active symptoms or extra effects or experiences.

Hallucinations and delusions

- ⦿ Hallucinations are false perceptions of which hearing voices is the most common but can involve seeing feeling tasting or smelling things. They are perceived as very real and can be frightening
- ⦿ Delusions are false beliefs including feeling persecuted or guilty, that they are on a special mission or being controlled by other people
- ⦿ Can also include paranoid thoughts.

Thought disorder

- ⦿ Difficulty concentrating, speech or memory problems
- ⦿ Not keeping to topic - jumping from one thought to another
- ⦿ Making it difficult for people to make decisions and communicate.

Changes in behaviour

- ⦿ Unpredictable or inappropriate behaviour
- ⦿ Extreme agitation
- ⦿ Feeling someone else is controlling their thoughts and behaviour.

Negative symptoms are when the individual stops doing things or becomes passive and withdrawn. These can include:

- ⦿ Lack of energy, blunted emotions, motivation and concentration and no drive
- ⦿ Withdrawing socially and not wanting to leave the house
- ⦿ Losing interest and motivation in life and activities and relationships
- ⦿ Failing to initiate conversation or having nothing to say
- ⦿ Lack of care about their own appearance and personal hygiene
- ⦿ Feeling uncomfortable with people and avoiding social contact.
- ⦿ Changes in sleeping patterns

There are lots of myths about schizophrenia:

People with schizophrenia have a split personality

- ⦿ This is the most common myth, but it's completely false. The word 'schizophrenia' literally translated means 'split mind' which has caused a lot of confusion. People with schizophrenia do sometimes experience delusions and hallucinations but they do not have two separate personalities.

Schizophrenia just affects your mental health

- ⦿ Many people do not realise the impact schizophrenia has on people's physical health. The physical effects of mental illness, combined with the side effects of anti-psychotic medication and lifestyle factors mean people with the condition have a life expectancy 20 years lower than average.

You will never recover from schizophrenia

- ⦿ Around 30 per cent of people with schizophrenia will have a lasting recovery and around a further 20 per cent will show significant improvement.

The impact of schizophrenia on daily life can vary massively depending on the severity of the condition and the impact can be minimal allowing individuals to sustain a successful life and career.

People who have schizophrenia:

- ⦿ Can appear unmotivated, disinterested or distant at times
- ⦿ May be distracted by their hallucinations
- ⦿ May be reluctant to talk to people and find communication difficult
- ⦿ Conversations may be disjointed which can make social situations awkward
- ⦿ May be socially isolated, either by choice or because others view their behaviour as strange
- ⦿ Can experience tiredness either due to disrupted sleep or as a side-effect of medication
- ⦿ If their condition is not well-managed by medication they may display irrational and unusual behaviour - possibly because they are reacting to their delusions and hallucinations.

People with schizophrenia need constant supervision

- ⦿ When people with schizophrenia are getting access to the treatment and support they need, there is no reason why they cannot lead happy and productive lives. Some people with schizophrenia live with family or in supported housing, but many of those affected live independently and are active members of society
- ⦿ Violence is not a symptom of schizophrenia and people with the illness are for more likely to be the victims of violence than the perpetrators.

Schizophrenia limits your abilities and intelligence

- ⦿ People with schizophrenia may have some difficulties with attention, learning, and memory but this doesn't mean they're not intelligent. Many creative and smart people throughout history have had schizophrenia, such as Nobel Prize-winning mathematician John Nash.

Contact us:

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