



# Understanding Mental Illness

## Session Three: Understanding Psychosis

Webinars presented by the National Council for  
Community Behavioral Healthcare in observance of  
May is Mental Health Month

*Program content based upon Mental Health First Aid USA*



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# Overview

- + Understanding Anxiety Disorders
  - Types of Psychotic Disorders
  - Signs & Symptoms
  - Risk factors
  
- + How to Help
  - *Assess for Risk of Suicide or Harm*
  - *Disruptive or Aggressive Behavior*



# What Is Mental Health First Aid?

**Mental Health First Aid** is the help offered to a person developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. The first aid is given until appropriate treatment and support are received or until the crisis resolves.

# Why Mental Health First Aid?

- + Mental health problems are common.
- + Stigma is associated with mental health problems.
- + Many people are not well informed about mental health problems.
- + Professional help is not always on hand.
- + People often do not know how to respond.
- + People with mental health problems often do not seek help.



# The Mental Health First Aid Action Plan

- + **A**ssess for risk of suicide or harm
- + **L**isten nonjudgmentally
- + **G**ive reassurance and information
- + **E**ncourage appropriate professional help
- + **E**ncourage self-help and other support strategies

# What Is a Mental Disorder?

A **mental disorder** or **mental illness** is a diagnosable illness that:

- + Affects a person's thinking, emotional state, and behavior
- + Disrupts the person's ability to
  - Work
  - Carry out daily activities
  - Engage in satisfying relationships

# U.S. Adults with a Mental Disorder in Any One Year



Type of Mental Disorder	% Adults
Anxiety disorder	18.1
Major depressive disorder	6.7
Substance use disorder	3.8
Bipolar disorder	2.6
Eating disorders	2.1
Schizophrenia	1.1
<b>Any mental disorder</b>	<b>26.2</b>

# Recovery from Mental Illness

“Recovery is the process in which people are able to live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities.”

“For some, this is the ability to live a fulfilling and productive life despite a disability.”

“For others, recovery implies the reduction or complete remission of symptoms.”

— *President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, 2003*



# **Christy Hutton, PhD.**

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# What is Psychosis?

- + Psychosis is a mental disorder in which a person has lost some contact with reality.
- + The person may have severe disturbances in thinking, emotion, and behavior.
- + Psychotic disorders are not as common as depression and anxiety disorders.
- + Psychosis usually occurs in episodes and is not a constant or static condition.

# Common Symptoms When Psychosis Is Developing

## Changes in emotion and motivation

- + Depression
- + Anxiety
- + Irritability
- + Suspiciousness
- + Blunted, flat, or inappropriate emotion
- + Change in appetite
- + Reduced energy and motivation

# Common Symptoms When Psychosis Is Developing

## Changes in thinking and perception

- + Difficulties with concentration or attention
- + Sense of alteration of self, others, or the outside world (e.g., feeling that self or others have changed or are acting different in some way)
- + Odd ideas
- + Unusual perceptual experiences (e.g., a reduction in or greater intensity of smell, sound, or color)

## Changes in behavior

- + Sleep disturbances
- + Social isolation or withdrawal
- + Reduced ability to carry out work and social roles

# Types of Disorders in Which Psychosis Occurs

- + Schizophrenia
- + Bipolar disorder
- + Psychotic depression
- + Schizoaffective disorder
- + Drug-induced psychosis

# Characteristics of Schizophrenia

- + Delusions
- + Hallucinations
- + Thinking difficulties
- + Loss of drive
- + Blunted emotions
- + Social withdrawal

# Characteristics of Mania

- + Increased energy and over activity
- + Elated mood
- + Need less sleep than usual
- + Irritability
- + Rapid thinking and speech
- + Lack of inhibitions
- + Grandiose delusions
- + Lack of insight

# Risk Factors for Psychotic Disorders

- + Genetic factors
- + Biochemistry
- + Stress
- + Other factors

# Without Early Intervention

- + Poorer long-term functioning
- + Increased risk of depression and suicide
- + Slower psychological maturation and slower uptake of adult responsibilities
- + Strain on relationships and subsequent loss of social supports
- + Disruption of education and employment
- + Increased use of alcohol and drugs
- + Loss of self-esteem and confidence
- + Greater chance of problems with the law

# How to Help

The most common crises to assess for in persons with psychotic symptoms are:

- + Suicidal thoughts and behaviors
- + Disruptive or aggressive behavior directed to other people

# How to Help

- + Approach the person in a caring and nonjudgmental way.
- + Speak slowly and confidently with a gentle, caring tone of voice.
- + Choose a private time and place, free from distractions.
- + Let the person know you are concerned and want to help; state the specific behaviors that concern you.
- + Let the person set the pace and style of interaction.
- + Do not argue or challenge the person.
- + Do not touch the person without permission.
- + Try to be aware of what may exacerbate the person's fear and aggression.
- + Respect the person's privacy and confidentiality.
- + Maintain your safety and access to an exit.
- + **Do not make promises you cannot keep**
- + Give the person hope for recovery

# How to Help

## Try to

- + Understand the symptoms for what they are.
- + Empathize with how the person is feeling about his or her beliefs and experiences.

## Try not to

- + Confront the person.
- + Criticize or blame.
- + Take delusional comments personally.
- + Use sarcasm.
- + Use patronizing statements.
- + State any judgments about the content of the beliefs and experiences.

# How to Help: Treatment Available

- + **Types of professionals**
  - Doctors (primary care physicians)
  - Psychiatrists
  - Social workers, counselors, and other mental health professionals
  - Certified peer specialists
- + **Types of Professional Help**
  - “Talk” therapies
  - Medication
  - Psychoeducation
  - Other professional supports
- + **Self Help and other support**
  - Peer support groups
  - Family, friends, and faith and other social networks
  - Family support groups
  - Discontinuation of alcohol and other drugs

# What If the Person Doesn't Want Help?

- + Encourage the person to talk with someone he or she trusts.
- + Never threaten the person with hospitalization.
- + Remain patient.
- + Remain friendly and open.
- + The person may want your help in the future.

# Questions on Psychosis

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# Mental Health First Aid in your Community

- + A recording of this webinar & the power point will be available on the National Council website 48 hours after it has ended.
- + Visit [www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org](http://www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org) for further information on the course and to find an instructor near you.
- + Become a fan of Mental Health First Aid USA on Facebook & get updates and information on a variety of mental health topics.
- + For any further questions, contact Bryan Gibb at [bryang@thenationalcouncil.org](mailto:bryang@thenationalcouncil.org) or Susan Partain at [susanp@thenationalcouncil.org](mailto:susanp@thenationalcouncil.org) or 202.684.3732.



# More in the Understanding Mental Illness Webcast Series

Visit [www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org](http://www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org) for an audio recording and Powerpoint of today's webcast.

+ May 26            Understanding Substance Use Disorder

5 – 6 pm Eastern; 4 – 5 pm Central; 3 – 4 pm Mountain; 2 – 3 pm Pacific

*Today's attendees are not required to register again for these webcasts.*