

*Mental Illness:  
Real. Common. Treatable.*

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Mental health



Mental Illness

**Real. Common. Treatable**

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## More similar than dissimilar

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- Universal needs
- The power of compassion
- Ability to make a difference

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## Recovery Means...

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- The process in which people are able to:
  - Live
  - Work
  - Learn
  - Participate fully in their community
- Reduction of symptoms

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## Things to Consider

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- Working harder and longer
- Doing more with less
- Increasing job stress
- Job insecurity
- Differences in job skills/tasks

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## Risk Factors/Causes

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- Family history
- Genetics
- Environment
- Life events
- Medications
- Other illnesses

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## Triggers

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- Loss
- Trauma
- Chronic illness/pain
- Substance abuse
- Stress

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## Stigma

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- Cluster of negative attitudes and beliefs that motivate people to fear, reject, avoid and discriminate against people with mental illnesses.
- Leads others to avoid living, socializing, or working with, renting to, employing people with mental illnesses.
- Deters public from seeking to and wanting to pay for care

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## Stigma

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- Leads to internalized attitudes.
- Causing isolation, embarrassment and shame.
- Conceal symptoms and fail to seek treatment.
- Perpetuates cycle.

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## Employee Attitudes about Mental Health

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- Concerned with confidentiality
- Fear impact on job
- Unsure of coverage/benefits
- Reluctant to talk about it
- Myths
- Consequences

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## The challenges

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- Affects people in prime working years.
- Chronic nature.
- Type of impairment caused.
- Mental illness
- Handwriting exercise
- Some sobering statistics

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## What is mental illness?

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- More than temporary impairment of functioning
- More than a temporary alteration of mood
- Disordered thinking
- Undue, prolonged anxiety out of proportion to any identifiable reason or cause

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## What is mental illness? (cont.)

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Questions to ask:

What is the severity?

What is the duration?

How many symptoms?

What is the level of impact?

**\*\* Get a professional diagnosis \*\***

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## Mental Illnesses

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- Depression
- Bipolar Disorder
- Anxiety Disorders
  - Generalized Anxiety Disorder
  - Panic Disorder
  - Phobias
  - PTSD
  - OCD
- Schizophrenia

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## Recognizing Depression

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- Sadness or irritability
- Lack of interest in things that had been pleasurable
- Change in appetite or weight
- Change in sleep patterns
- Always tired or lacking energy
- Feeling guilty, hopeless or worthless
- Can't concentrate, remember or make decisions
- On-going aches and pains
- Thoughts of death or suicide

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## Recognizing Bipolar

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Alternating between depression and mania.

Mania:

- Hyperactivity
- Excessive energy
- Decreased need for sleep
- Inappropriate behavior
- Unusually irritable
- Grandiose notions
- Racing thoughts
- Excessive spending
- Increased sex drive

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## Recognizing Anxiety

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- Constant, exaggerated, worrisome thoughts and tension about everyday life
- Anticipating the worst
- Restless, aggitated
- Body is constantly tense and unable to relax
- Difficulty concentrating

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## Recognizing Anxiety (con't)

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- Sleep disturbance
- Sweating
- Heart palpitations
- Feeling dizzy or faint
- Panic attacks
- Exaggerated startle response
- Nightmares or flashbacks

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## Recognizing Schizophrenia

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- Hearing or seeing something that is not there
- A constant feeling of being watched
- Extreme preoccupation with religion
- Increasing withdrawal from social situations
- Disordered thinking
- Delusions
- Lack of pleasure or interest in activities
- Difficulty in concentrating
- Blunt affect

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## Workers with mental health issues

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- More susceptible
- Problems with information – particularly when stressed
- Medication side effects
- Recurrence
- Stigma and self-disclosure

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## Signs in the Workplace

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- Decreased productivity
- Lack of cooperation
- Excessive fatigue
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Safety/Accidents
- Irritability
- Trouble completing projects
- Absent-mindedness
- Change in behavior
- Tardiness
- Absenteeism
- Alcohol/Drug use
- Low morale

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## What to Do?

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- Know your resources
  - External and internal
- Know yourself
- Know about mental health and mental illnesses
- A few specifics

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## As a Member of a Team Consider...

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- Who works with this person besides you?
- Who can you talk with? Who can support you?
- Who needs to take the next step?
- What are the helpful organizations?

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## Taking Care of Yourself

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- Be aware of your own stress
- Take appropriate breaks
- Basics/Breathe
- Identify your own circle of support
- Ask for help
- View behavior as a person's way to communicate

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## Ask yourself:

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- How long have the symptom(s) been going on?
- How many symptoms are there?
- How severe is the symptom(s)?
- How many areas of life are being disrupted/affected by these symptoms?
  
- \*\* Get a professional diagnosis \*\*

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## Treatment

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- Success rate is higher (60-80%) than for other illnesses such as heart disease (40-50%)
- You cannot “will it away”
- Treatment depends on severity and personal preference
- Work can play a therapeutic role
- Kinds of treatment

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## Treatment

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- Primary care provider
- Mental health specialist (psychiatrist, psychologist, counselor)
- Community mental health center
- Private clinic
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Clergy

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## Potential Local Resources

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- Local/County/State Mental Health Boards/Departments
- State NAMI Chapters (check [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org) for contact information)
- Employer provided "Employee Assistance Program (EPA)"
- Independent Living Centers (check [www.ILUSA.COM](http://www.ILUSA.COM) for Centers in your area)

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## National Resources

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- National Mental Health America (has State Affiliates)  
1-800-969-NMHA (6642) or  
[www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org)
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) (Has State/Local Affiliates)  
1-800-950-NAMI (6264) or  
[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

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- Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation  
Boston University  
<http://web.bu.edu/cpr/>
  - Partnership for Workplace Mental Health  
(program of American Psychiatric Foundation)  
<http://www.workplacementalhealth.org/>

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- National Network Regional ADA Centers  
800-949-4232 (V/TTY)  
[www.adata.org](http://www.adata.org)

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## Speaker Contact Information

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