



## Key Facts About Mental Health

- One in four of us will experience a serious problem with our mental wellbeing at some point in our lives. This means it is highly unlikely any of us will make it through life without having a problem, or being close to someone who does.
- Total economic cost due to lost work and absenteeism associated with depression and anxiety disorders is around \$12 billion each year.
- Only about 20% of people with severe mental health problems are in paid employment
- Only about 50% of those with less serious problems are in paid employment, yet 80% want to work.
- About 1 in every 200 adults experience a psychotic disorder, like schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, in any one year.
- People with serious mental health problems die on average 10 years younger than other people. This is because of the greater risk of physical health problems and poorer access to healthcare.
- 70% of people affected by mental illness say they have experienced discrimination at some time because of it.
- Most people say they would not want anyone to know if they developed a mental illness.

1 in 5 children have a mental health problem in any one year, and about half of all mental health problems are rooted in childhood.

1 in 20 people have some form of dementia.

1 in 15 young people self harm.



## Signs for Mental Illness

Each mental illness has its own characteristic's or symptoms. However, there are some general warning signs that might alert you that someone needs professional help. Some of these signs include:

- ◇ Marked personality change
- ◇ Inability to cope with problems and daily activities
- ◇ Strange or grandiose ideas
- ◇ Excessive **anxieties**
- ◇ Prolonged depression and apathy
- ◇ Marked changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- ◇ Thinking or talking about suicide or harming oneself
- ◇ Extreme mood swings—high or low
- ◇ Abuse of alcohol or drugs, and excessive anger, hostility, or violent behavior

A person who shows any of these signs should seek help from a qualified health professional.

Social factors also present risks and can harm an individual's, especially a child's, mental health. Social factors include:

- ◇ Severe parental discord,
- ◇ Death of a family member or close friend,
- ◇ Parent's mental illness,
- ◇ Parent's criminality,
- ◇ Overcrowding,
- ◇ Economic hardship,
- ◇ Abuse,
- ◇ Neglect, and
- ◇ Exposure to violence.

## Defining Mental Illness

**A mental illness can be defined as a health condition that changes a person's thinking, feelings, or behavior (or all three) and that causes the person distress and difficulty in functioning.** As with many diseases, mental illness is severe in some cases and mild in others. Individuals who have a mental illness don't necessarily look like they are sick, especially if their illness is mild. Other individuals may show more explicit symptoms such as confusion, agitation, or withdrawal. There are many different mental illnesses, including **depression, schizophrenia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism, and obsessive-compulsive disorder**. Each illness alters a person's thoughts, feelings, and/or behaviors in distinct ways.

Not all brain diseases are categorized as mental illnesses. Disorders such as epilepsy, Parkinson's disease, and multiple sclerosis are brain disorders, but they are considered neurological diseases rather than mental illnesses. Interestingly, the lines between mental illnesses and these other brain or neurological disorders is blurring somewhat. As scientists continue to investigate the brains of people who have mental illnesses, they are learning that mental illness is associated with changes in the brain's structure, chemistry, and function and that mental illness does indeed have a biological basis. This ongoing research is, in some ways, causing scientists to minimize the distinctions between mental illnesses and these other brain disorders.