

MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS

A silhouette of a person with curly hair, looking down and to the right. The background is a gradient of purple and orange, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The sun is visible as a bright orange circle in the lower right quadrant.

Understanding Different
Anxiety and Mental Health Disorders

Mental Health Disorders

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Disclaimer

We hope you enjoy reading this publication, however, we do suggest you read our disclaimer.

All the material written in this document is provided for informational purposes only and is general in nature.

Every person is a unique individual and what has worked for some, or even many, may not work for you. Any information perceived as advice must be considered in light of your own particular set of circumstances.

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Every attempt has been made to provide well-researched and up-to-date content at the time of writing. Now all the legalities have been taken care of, please enjoy the content.

Introduction

At face value, it can appear that there seem to be more people suffering from mental health conditions than ever before.

What is more likely is that other factors are involved. These factors include increased awareness of not only the conditions themselves but of how common they are.

In the not-too-distant past, when those with almost any mental health condition were considered 'abnormal', sufferers went to great lengths to hide their symptoms as much as they could.

Their families helped them in this to avoid embarrassment and stigma. When symptoms could not be kept hidden, sufferers were incorrectly labeled, stigmatized and ostracized.

A huge part of the problem was the accepted perception that a person was either mentally stable or not. This binary thinking meant that any variance to what was considered 'normal' was treated as a form of madness or insanity.

Thankfully today there is an improved understanding that mental health, like everything else relating to health and well-being, exists on a spectrum. There is still much room for improvement to achieve better outcomes for those affected.

Likewise, causes and influences differ also. There is a complex interplay of these factors, and it is simplistic to attribute cause without a complete understanding of the person and their history.

Agoraphobia Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment

AGORAPHOBIA

A person suffering from this disorder often hates leaving the safety of their own home.

Agoraphobia is a type of anxiety disorder, characterized by the fear and avoidance of situations where escape may be difficult. A person suffering from this disorder often hates leaving the safety of their own home, as they have a huge fear of going out into open or crowded areas.

They may also feel extremely anxious in case they can't seek help if something terrible happens. Some of the known fears and anxieties include open spaces, traveling via public transportation, going out of their home, or going into a shopping mall.

People with agoraphobia try to avoid certain places or situations that may cause them to be put in danger (in their eyes), or make them feel trapped and helpless. They find it difficult to feel safe in a crowded area and if they go to public places they must go with a trusted friend to avoid their overwhelming fear of disaster or embarrassment.

This is why many people with agoraphobia often choose to never leave their homes. Unfortunately, the more they do stay in their home, the worse their condition can become. Agoraphobia is the fear of being out in the open and feeling vulnerable to the world, and it is a real condition that can trigger severe anxiety and panic attacks and therefore, needs therapy and treatment.

Causes of Agoraphobia

Agoraphobia may develop as a complication of an anxiety disorder known as panic disorder. This typically involves overwhelming and intense fear that induces panic attacks.

Inherited genes and certain health conditions may trigger and worsen agoraphobia. Environmental stressors also have a role to play in it, including temperament and past experiences. A traumatic incident may be enough to contribute to the development of agoraphobia.

Signs and Symptoms of Agoraphobia

These are common signs and symptoms of a person suffering from agoraphobia.

- Fear of leaving home. They find it difficult to walk out their front door.
- The fear and anxiety of being alone in a public area.
- The fear of finding themselves surrounded by many people. Crowds are frightening to them.
- Being in an open area, especially if they feel that there is no help available if they need it.
- Fear of being trapped, such as in an elevator or small space.
- Taking public transportation can be terrifying.

Exposure to these types of situations is enough for people with agoraphobia to trigger a panic attack. Even if there is no actual reason for them to feel scared or anxious, their own anxious feelings and thoughts will cause them significant distress.

Women are more likely to be diagnosed with agoraphobia than men, although many men suffer from this disorder. This condition may develop in childhood, but it typically develops in the younger adult years.

Diagnosis and Treatment

Agoraphobia is an anxiety disorder that needs treatment early to keep symptoms from escalating and becoming worse. The longer agoraphobia stays untreated, the harder it is to manage. This condition can significantly affect a person's life, making it very difficult to function normally.

It can make simple everyday tasks and errands nearly impossible to accomplish. Getting diagnosed with agoraphobia begins by closely looking at the typical signs and symptoms in behavior. A licensed mental health physician will be responsible for diagnosing a patient with agoraphobia.

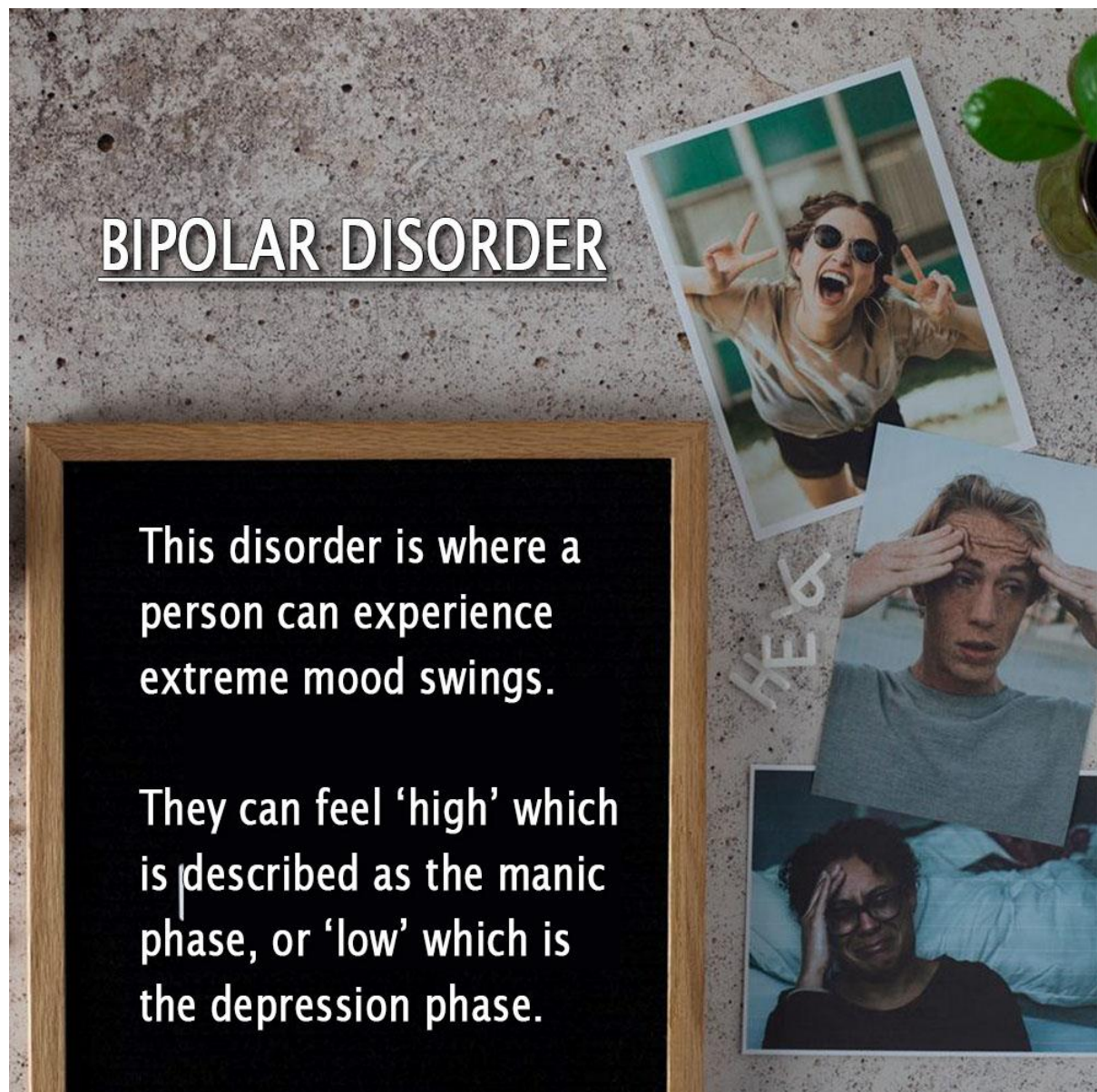
A physical exam will help rule out any physical health conditions, and an in-depth interview with your physician or mental health specialist will be part of the diagnosis. The most effective treatments include psychotherapy.

In some cases where the need is recognized, taking medications as prescribed by the doctor will be necessary. Medications for treating agoraphobia may include antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications.

Alternative medicine may also prove to be helpful and some may bring similar results to prescription drugs. Whatever medicines, natural or prescription, are taken as part of the treatment, should always be discussed with your health professional.

Treatment is a must and should be taken with safety measures in place to avoid further escalation of the symptoms becoming worse.

Bipolar Disorder - Formerly Known As Manic Depression



Bipolar disorder is a complex mental health disorder where a person experiences extreme mood swings, erratic thought patterns, and behaviors.

Someone with bipolar disorder commonly swings from feeling up and happy, to low and sad.

They go through periods of depression and mania.

What Causes Bipolar Disorder?

This is a serious disorder that can develop from a combination of genetic and biological factors, as well as circumstantial events. Just like most mood disorders, there is not one known definite cause of bipolar disorder.

However, it is believed that it often results from a combination of genetic predisposition, biological causes brought by brain abnormalities, and traumatic life conditions. People diagnosed with bipolar disorder may fall under one or more of these preconditions.

People diagnosed with bipolar disorder show imbalances in their brain neurotransmitters or hormones, resulting in impaired brain function. A study determined that bipolar disorder was more common in people with family members who also had the same disorder.

The [source](#) said, *'The results of our study support the fact that a significant relationship exists between the degree of kinship and the heritability of bipolar disorder and, furthermore, that the effect of the maternal and paternal sides is similar on the transmission of genetic susceptibility.'*

Also, just like other mood disorders, there are associations between traumatic life events such as abuse and loss, that can trigger the onset of bipolar.

Bipolar I Disorder and Bipolar II Disorder

Bipolar I Disorder is made up of one manic episode, followed by either hypomania or depression. In some cases, the manic episode may trigger psychosis.

Bipolar II Disorder is made up of one major depression episode accompanied by at least one hypomanic episode.

The manic episodes of Bipolar I Disorder type can be dangerous and severe. Bipolar II Disorder is a milder form of this disorder, but people with this condition can experience depression for a long time.

Signs and Symptoms to Watch For

Signs and symptoms of bipolar disorder are major shifts in mood, behaviors, energy levels, and sleeping patterns. The swings in mood can vary extremely causing unstable moods on several occasions.

Depressive Mood Episode Signs and Symptoms

- Feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and emptiness.
- Feelings of worthlessness and guilt.
- Weight loss, even though they are not on a diet, or weight gain.
- Loss of interest in any of their hobbies or favorite activities.
- Poor sleep habits. For example, they may have the inability to sleep and develop insomnia. Or they may have problems oversleeping.
- Loss of energy and feeling fatigued a lot of the time.
- Inability to think and concentrate.
- Inability to make a decision.
- Thoughts of suicide when extremely depressed.

Mania and Hypomania Signs and Symptoms

- Having lots of energy and being too exuberant.
- Very little need for sleep.
- Unusual upbeat mood or euphoria.
- Being unusually talkative or loud.
- Heightened irritability.
- Poor decision-making and judgment.
- Impulsive and reckless behaviors.
- Talking fast because of racing thoughts.
- Becoming easily distracted as their thoughts can't stay focused.

In some cases, a manic episode can trigger a person to take a break from reality. This is a condition known as psychosis and could require them to be hospitalized for safety reasons.

Treating Bipolar Disorder

An early diagnosis is important and key in helping the individual. Most cases begin early in life. For example, it can develop in childhood, adolescence, or before a person reaches 25 years of age. Bipolar symptoms vary in severity.

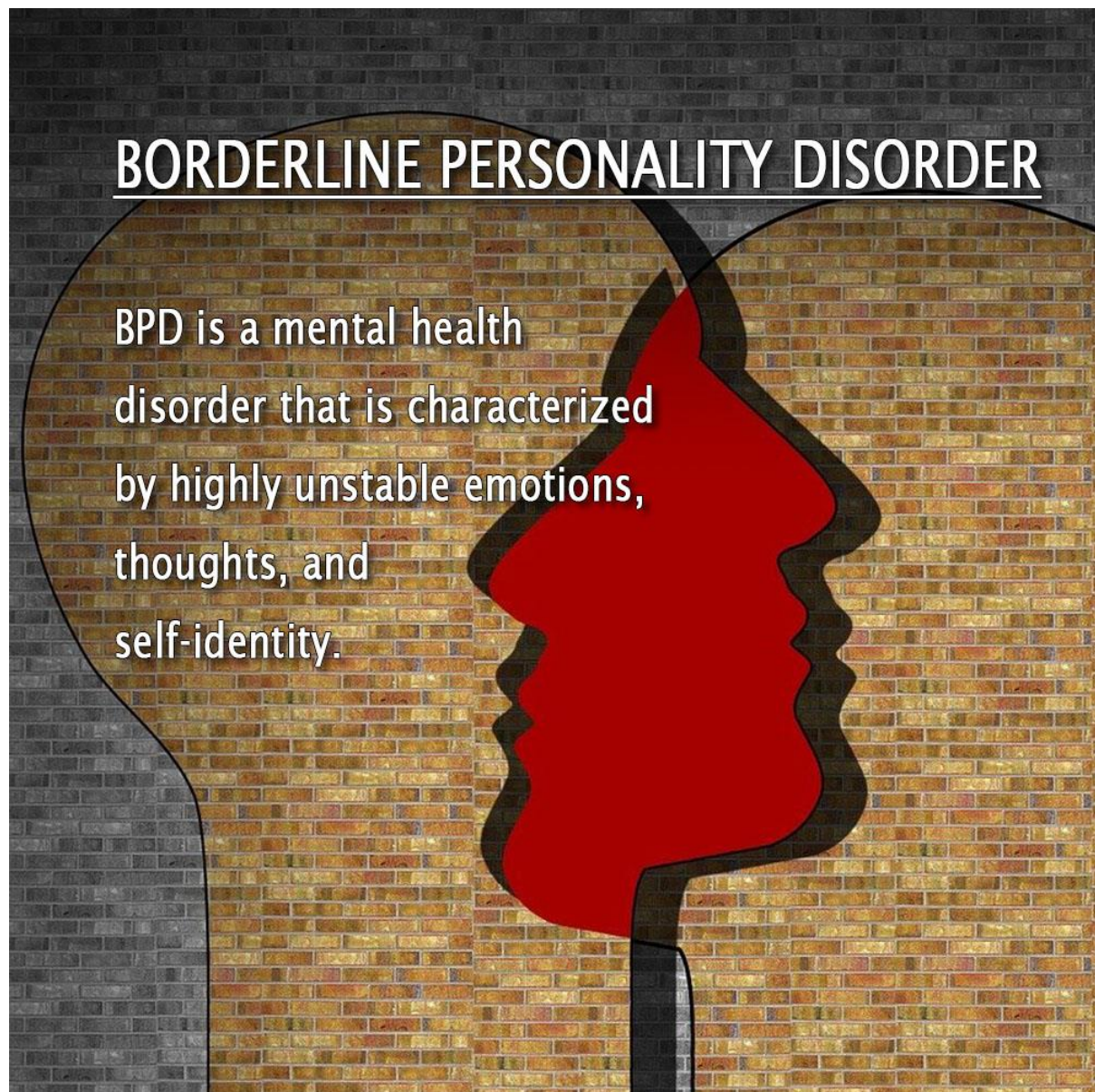
Treating bipolar disorder is best done with the guidance of someone who specializes in the treatment of mental health illnesses. As it is a lifelong condition similar to other chronic illnesses, symptoms must be managed very carefully throughout a person's life.

Treatments include therapies and medications. Medications are taken to help manage mood shifts and are not a one-time thing. Skipping medications is not recommended for patients diagnosed with this condition as it can trigger a relapse of the symptoms.

Psychotherapy is also key to regulating a patient's symptoms throughout their life. Finding the right support is helpful for a diagnosed individual's well-being which may include proper education and being part of a supportive family or group.

Therapy and proper lifestyle changes are needed to help make the person's life a calm and happy life.

Borderline Personality Disorder – What Is BPD?



Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is a mental health illness that is characterized by highly unstable emotions, thoughts, and self-identity.

People who are suffering from Borderline Personality Disorder experience a rollercoaster of emotions and thoughts consistently.

This results in a lack of control over their emotional outbursts, reckless behaviors, and unstable relationships.

Those with Borderline Personality Disorder also tend to be extremely sensitive about little things. Once they start reacting to a situation, they can have difficulty calming down from their intense emotions of anger and some may tend to become violent.

Borderline Personality Disorder begins in early adulthood and is only diagnosed in adults. Even though young children and teenagers may sometimes show signs of this disorder, most of them are exhibiting only signs of emotional immaturity and their behaviors change as they mature.

Are There Known Causes?

Like most mental health issues, there isn't one clear thing that causes a person to develop a borderline personality disorder. Therefore, the exact cause of Borderline Personality Disorder remains undetermined.

It's believed that it's out of a combination of biological or natural causes and environmental factors (mostly from childhood). These include genetics, family history, traumatic life events in childhood, experiencing abuse and neglect, hostile environments, being in abusive relationships, and other factors of similar nature.

These factors may heighten a person's chance of developing BPD, but it doesn't always follow that those who experience these types of events in their lives or have a genetic predisposition towards developing this disorder, will automatically follow suit.

There may also be some brain abnormalities that are common among patients diagnosed with BPD. Some brain chemicals responsible for emotional regulation, like serotonin, do not function as well as they should.

Their brain is on constant alert and their fight-or-flight switch doesn't work properly. When it gets triggered by even a very minor event, it goes into overdrive leading to heightened emotions and stress responses.

They may have had traumatic childhood experiences and memories of abuse and neglect. These can also potentially trigger the development of this disorder.

What Are The Signs and Symptoms of BPD?

Here are some of the common signs and symptoms of this disorder.

- Feelings of intense sadness, anger, or anxiety that can last for hours or extended periods of time.
- The tendency to see themselves negatively. They may even think they are bad and say things like, 'I am bad.' Some may feel they do not exist.
- Fear and anxiety of being abandoned or separated. It can leave them with a constant feeling of emptiness within.
- They anticipate being rejected by others.
- Lack of trust in other people.
- Experience constant turmoil in relationships with family, friends, and close relationships. Relationships are difficult for them.
- Lack of stability in terms of how they see themselves.
- Their goals and values can change a lot as they are in a constant state of unknowing.
- Self-harming actions, self-injury, suicidal thoughts, and tendencies.
- Risky behaviors, such as binge eating, drug use, gambling, drinking excessively, etc.
- Aggressive behaviors including loss of temper, physical violence, extreme anger, offensive sarcasm, bitterness, and other inappropriate behaviors.

Is There Any Treatment?

All hope is not lost for those who have Borderline Personality Disorder. Finding the right qualified physician, psychologist or psychiatrist will help evaluate the person's struggles and help in their diagnosis, which will aid in their treatment of this mental illness.

The best natural treatment for Borderline Personality Disorder is psychotherapy. Psychotherapy or talk therapy can only be successfully done with a qualified mental health physician or therapist.

Other forms of treating Borderline Personality Disorder may include medications such as antidepressants or mood-stabilizing drugs.

In cases where patients demonstrate self-harming tendencies, doctors may suggest psychiatric hospitalization or clinic confinement. This would be in times when they feel the need to keep the patient safe from bodily harm.

Even though recovery may not be instant, or complete recovery never reached, getting help as soon as possible is the best form of treatment.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)



People suffering from Generalized Anxiety Disorder experience a sense of worry and fear about almost everything.

They may anticipate tragic events happening, and find it difficult not to worry about their health, money, family, or anything in their life.

These worries are usually just unnecessary worrying, and to most people, they are seen as being exaggerated or imagined. For GAD sufferers, their everyday existence is filled with fear, both of the known and the unknown.

Ultimately, their apprehensions control their way of thinking. This later affects their daily functioning at work, disturbs their academic performance, restricts their social activities, and adversely influences their relationships.

Although these are all common sources of worry, if someone is in a state of endless fear or worry over them, then it may be possible that they are suffering from *Generalized Anxiety Disorder*.

While many people with this condition know that they are 'over-anxious' about many things, they feel that have no control over their apprehension and related anxiety.

Physical Symptoms

GAD, although a mental health disorder, can also produce physical symptoms such as the following.

- The unnecessary and continuing worry can lead to tense muscles, headaches, and sweating.
- An impractical perspective of life problems can result in irritability and restlessness.
- Difficulty focusing can lead to migraines, eye soreness, and nausea.
- Exhaustion, plus they may also have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep.
- Physical unsteadiness and easily alarmed.

Factors That May Cause GAD

The precise source of GAD is not completely identified, but some factors can contribute to its development, such as genetics, brain chemistry, and environmental stressors.

Based on many reports from the [Anxiety Disorders Association of America](#), anxiety disorders can be transferred from one family member to another by certain family environmental dynamics like styles of parenting and continuous family conflict.

An example is a hovering parent of many years; this can turn a child into a cowering adult. Times of suffering and traumatic events, such as sexual abuse, the sudden death of a loved one, a divorce, or abrupt change in jobs or schools, can contribute to the development of GAD and can exacerbate the symptoms.

Similarly, the use of and withdrawal from addictive substances, like alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine, can also intensify anxiety. The specific nerve cell pathways that link the parts of the brain that engage thinking and emotion, rely on chemicals called neurotransmitters to convey information from one nerve cell to another.

If these pathways that connect specific brain sections do not operate as they are supposed to, it can lead to problems associated with moods and anxiety.

Drugs, psychotherapies, and other types of remedies that can ‘tweak’ these neurotransmitters can enhance the signaling between the pathways and can hopefully thwart the development of symptoms related to anxiety and depression, and GAD.

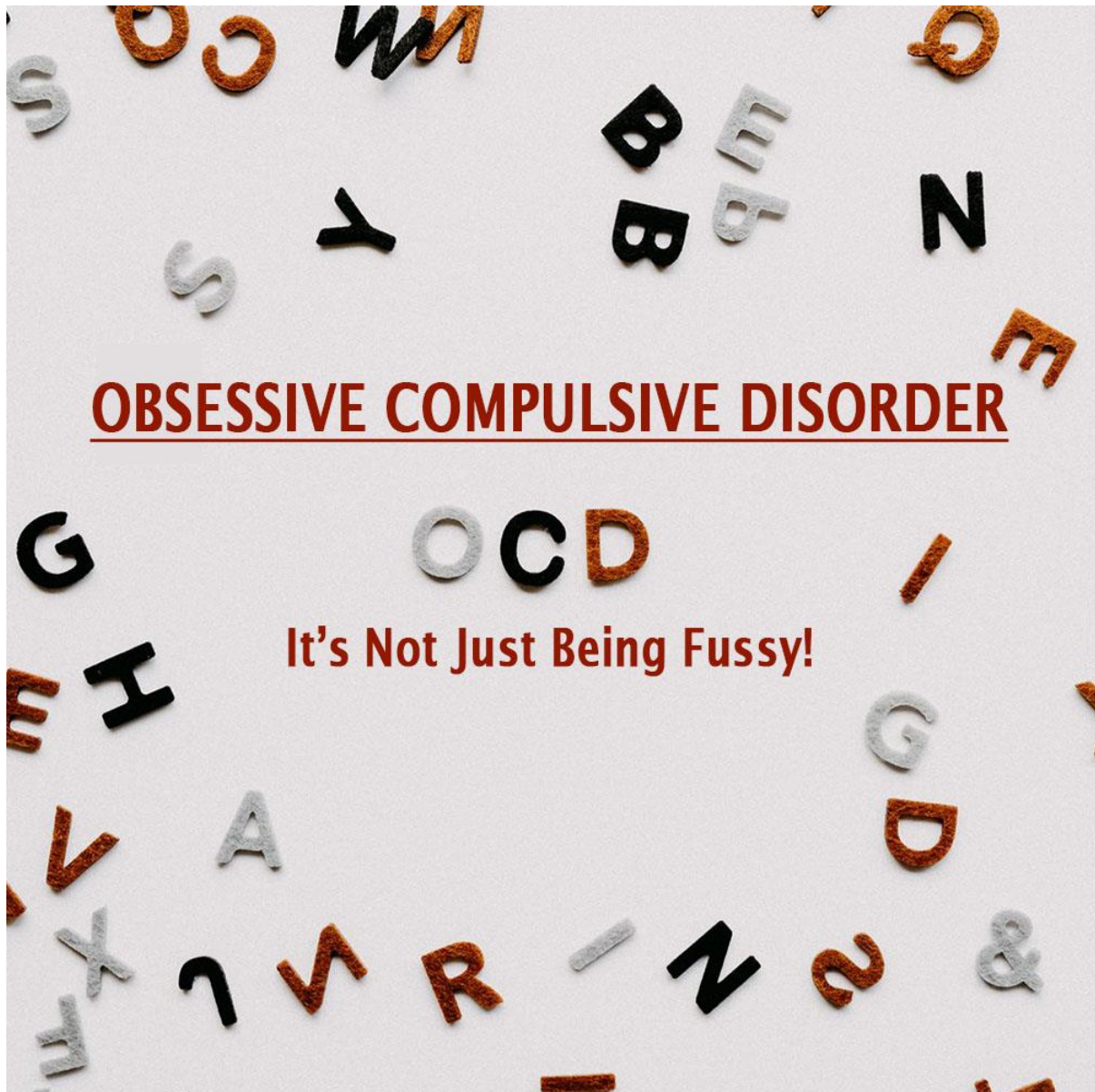
Imagine a road connection all out of order. There would be chaos and ‘disorder.’ That’s what can happen in the brain. Jumbled connections between the section of the brain that processes fear and emotion and the other brain regions, can create problems, such as an anxiety disorder.

What Can You Do?

GAD can be managed with a blend of behavioral and psychological healing, prescribed drugs, and lifestyle changes. If you are not sure if you or someone you know may be suffering from GAD, consult your doctor and be honest with your feelings. Let them know the degree of worrying that is occurring.

They will be able to help you or direct you as to what to do next. They will provide you with a series of recommendations on what to do to alleviate your concerns, whether others think they are imagined or real.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder



Many people see a person who is overly fussy, or what they would call obsessive-compulsive as being funny, or a person to laugh at.

They may be someone who is super orderly with their things.

They arrange their closet based on colors, their house is squeaky clean, and everything is in its proper place.

You might call them obsessive-compulsive, but that term doesn't pertain to obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). The person who is fussy is possibly a perfectionist, which is a different thing. Having OCD is not funny at all.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Overview

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is a mental health disorder whereby a person has obsessions, which are unwanted thoughts, that are devastating fixations about a particular thing(s) or sensation(s).

They may be unreasonably anxious over a possible event that has very little chance of really happening, or are driven to do something repeatedly, known as a compulsion. This can lead to stressful actions.

It is normal to check the door to see if it has been locked for the night, or to check to make sure the stove has been properly turned off. That's just being cautious. You may have even gone back to your house, to check that something was done right.

However, if you have to check and re-check over and over, and your actions are more like a habitual sequence, rather than just a forgetful mind, then you may be showing signs of *obsessive-compulsive disorder*.

What Are The Types Of OCD?

While we all have habits and repeated thoughts, OCD is when it's adversely affecting everyday life. The thoughts and urges are out of control, aren't enjoyable, and the person feels helpless – a victim of their own thoughts and actions. OCD can affect people in different ways.

If you think you may have OCD, see if you recognize any of these behaviors.

Checking and Rechecking

You feel the need to check everything. Did you lock the door? Is the oven clean? Did you unplug the appliance? Did you turn off the lights?

You feel a need to keep checking details to ensure you haven't missed anything, even if you have only checked them a few minutes ago.

Fear of Contamination

You keep washing your hands for fear that the things you touch are contaminated. You continuously use cleaning agents or alcohol on any part of your body with the intention of getting rid of bacteria or anything that might make you 'diseased.'

You may also brush your teeth excessively, or clean the bathroom and kitchen multiple times a day. You also avoid crowded places or touching other people for fear of contracting germs. Sometimes, people with OCD also feel they've been treated like dirt (emotionally), and they try to get rid of the feeling by constant washing.

Hoarding

You feel like you can't let go of your possessions even when they're no longer useful. You're obsessed with the thought that you need to keep them or save them for later. For example, hoarding unnecessary items such as old newspapers or empty food containers. You can't bring yourself to throw anything away.

Intrusive Thoughts

You might be obsessed with a line of thought, or you can't stop yourself from repetitive, unwanted thoughts. They may be aggressive, violent, and harmful to others and yourself (even suicidal thoughts).

Mostly, you're unlikely to act on the thoughts or be violent. They often remain inside your head, causing you great distress and fear.

You may also keep worrying that someone close to you might get sick with a life-threatening disease, might have a heart attack, or will suddenly die without any basis in fact.

Symmetry and Orderliness

This type of OCD involves arranging everything in a particular order or symmetry. Otherwise, you'll feel uncomfortable and stressed. You become bothered when something is not in its place, even when it is only millimeters from its 'proper' position. Everything has its place and order and you will not stop until it is right.

Signs Of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Obsessive-compulsive disorder generally covers both obsessions and compulsions. In some cases, though, a person only has either the obsession indicators or compulsion signs.

The person suffering from this disorder does not often realize that their obsession with something or their compulsion to do an act is unreasonable or excessive.

Here are some of the signs.

Obsession	Compulsion
Fear of contamination or dirt	Repeatedly washing your hands
Fear of uncertainty	Counting or doing tasks in a specific order
Arranging things in a particular order	Always checking if the door is locked or the stove is off
Violent thoughts	Following a strict routine
Thinking about harming yourself or others	Monitoring the body for symptoms of illness
Unwanted thoughts like aggression	Repeatedly reviewing an event or memory
Worrying about yourself or others getting hurt	Seeking approval or reassurance all the time
Constantly being aware of body sensations	Constantly counting or repeating certain words, especially out of fear
Fear of touching surfaces or shaking hands	Engaging in ceremonies or rituals
Focused on a specific superstition or on objects that are viewed to be lucky or unlucky	Tapping your fingers

Can You Treat OCD?

Treatments may include medications and cognitive behavioral therapy. The doctor may prescribe you antidepressant or antipsychotic medications.

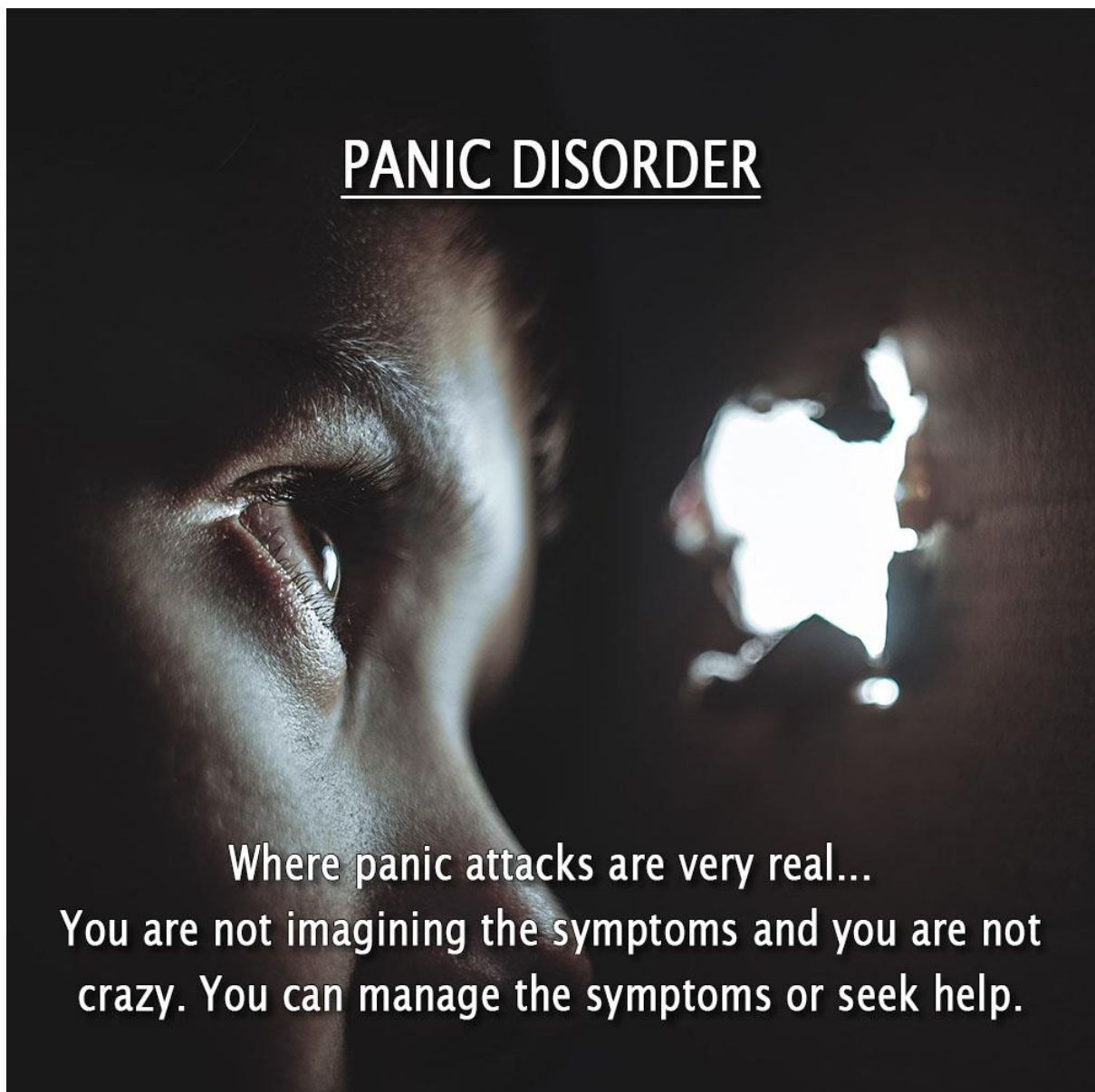
Psychotherapies can help change the way you feel, think, and behave by exposing you to certain situations and objects or teaching you how to respond and resist your obsessions and compulsions.

If you're experiencing symptoms of OCD, don't hesitate to seek professional help. With proper guidance and treatment, you can improve the quality of your life.

If you meet someone who exhibits the behavior enumerated above, don't simply assume that they are being super fussy, and especially don't laugh at them.

Try to understand and expand your compassion because that person may just be suffering from OCD.

Panic Disorder - Where Panic Attacks Are Very Real



Heart pounding, profuse sweating, inability to breathe normally, and cannot think straight.

Have you ever felt like this?

Have you ever felt like you are about to explode, yet don't know where you can run to?

If you experience feelings like this, don't misinterpret them as having any physical problem, such as a heart attack or asthma attack.

Your pounding heart and breathing problem may be a mental health issue known as a ‘panic disorder.’

This disorder, if left ignored, can adversely affect your quality of life. It can also lead to other types of fears and mental health issues, such as depression. It can also cause problems at work and interfere with your social life.

Common Causes of Panic Disorder

Stress

Everyday inconveniences and stressful situations, such as rush-hour traffic or missing your bus, can lead to anxiety and panic. Problems at work and lingering relationship issues can also result in persistent, excessive worry.

These can become overwhelming and cause your heart to palpitate, make you feel short of breath, and suffer from extreme nervousness.

Undesirable Thoughts or Emotions

When you’re distressed or unsatisfied, the words you say to your inner self can prompt greater feelings of unease. Saying negative things to yourself can cause you more apprehension, and negative thoughts can trigger physical reactions.

Money-Related Issues

Worries about money or having debts that feel like they have gotten out of control can trigger anxiety and panic attacks. Unexpected bills and looming payments can lead to extreme trepidation.

Conflict

Relationship problems, arguments, and disagreements are sure causes of anxiety and can trigger panic attacks. Even when there is an impasse on the issues at hand, the worries continue persistently, and the body responds.

Health Issues

A diagnosis that's distressing or difficult to manage, such as a lingering illness or cancer, can activate anxiety and prompt panic attacks. This type of trigger is very controlling because of the instantaneous and personal feelings it produces.

Drugs

Specific medicines and over-the-counter pills can lead to symptoms of anxiety. The ingredients in these medications can make you feel uncomfortable or ill. These feelings can begin a sequence of events in your mind which result in other indications of nervousness.

Drugs that can trigger anxiety include:

- Birth control prescriptions
- Cough and congestion tablets
- Weight loss capsules.

Upcoming Parties or Social Events

Events demanding you to make an appearance, whether it be a formal occasion or a party with friends, may cause some individuals to set off a panic attack. An overly anxious mind can trigger physical responses such as sweating, heart palpitations, migraines, and stomach aches.

Self-Help Tactics To Cope with Panic Attacks

Even if you feel immobilized or defenseless about your panic attacks, there are things you can do to help yourself. You don't need to rush to see a healthcare professional if you are able to begin to control them yourself.

Below are some self-help practices you can do to help you cope with a looming panic attack.

Breathe

Among the effective ways of slowing down your body's reaction to anxiety is to do deep breathing. Hyperventilation creates many sensations that happen during a panic attack. Deep breathing can terminate the indicators of panic. Taking deliberate, deep, conscious breaths can help you relax. At the same time, unhurried breathing can do wonders for the stress response system.

Do Something Different Right Now

When the attacks come, it's time for you to control your mind by engaging yourself in different activities that can distract you from whatever you're feeling. The list of activities you can engage in can be as simple as watching a funny movie, reading your favorite book, or taking a walk in the sunshine.

Activities like yoga and meditation are also great activities to immerse yourself in. There is a need to fully understand that the warning signs of panic attacks are not linked to some grave ailment. While the attacks may terrorize you, they are not in themselves fatal, although when they are persistent they will adversely affect your health and happiness.

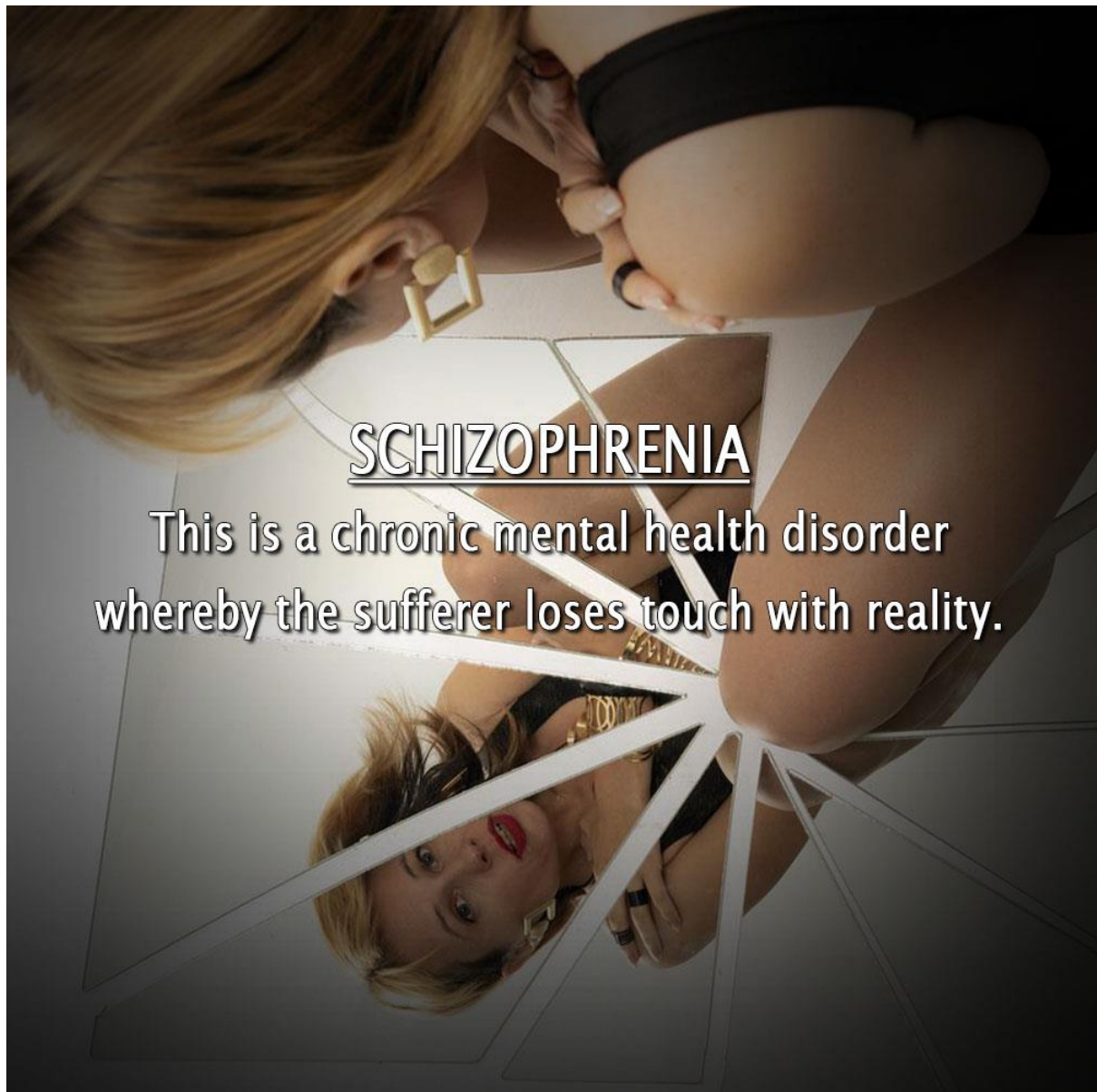
Anxiety and panic can become worse if you find yourself isolated from the people you feel can help and support you. Take the effort to reach out to people who care about you and those whom you think are important in your life.

Panic Attacks Are Real

Remember that panic attacks are very real. You're not imagining the symptoms and you're not crazy. They exist. To overcome the symptoms and avoid the disorder from taking over your life, seek help.

Recognize its presence, accept its reality, then act to manage it. Don't expect a sudden, magical 'cure', but know that with support and practice you can manage the symptoms and reduce their occurrence and their debilitating intensity.

Schizophrenia - A Treatable Mental Health Disorder



Schizophrenia is a chronic mental health disorder whereby the affected individual loses touch with reality.

It is a serious condition that affects a person's behavior, thoughts, and way of life in general.

People with schizophrenia can experience delusions, hallucinations, abnormal thought patterns, inability to concentrate, or feel motivated to act in odd ways as a result of their condition.

This creates significant distress for the person. However, schizophrenia can also be treated. If left untreated, a person with schizophrenia may find it impossible to live a normal life. Ultimately, the condition can be debilitating.

Schizophrenia creates distorted thinking that leads to impaired functioning. It is a lifelong disability, although it can be managed. With early diagnosis and proper treatment, individuals with schizophrenia can have the opportunity to live a normal life.

What Causes Schizophrenia?

Schizophrenia is a brain disease. Its exact causes aren't known, however, it is thought that a complex interplay of genetic factors, environmental factors, and brain abnormalities. Genetics can play a role in the development of schizophrenia just like most mental health disorders, but it is not necessarily the case for all.

Many people with schizophrenia are not genetically linked to anyone with the same condition, and families with historical traces of the condition do not always develop the disease.

A person who is genetically linked to someone with schizophrenia can be at a higher risk and may have the potential to acquire the disorder if they are exposed to potential stressors.

Signs and Symptoms

The signs and symptoms of schizophrenia may vary, but it mainly involves problems with cognition, thoughts, feelings, and behavior.

Here are some symptoms typically associated with schizophrenia.

Hallucinations

An individual having hallucinations can either see things, hear sounds, taste, or feel things, but only they can experience them. They will feel very real.

Delusions

Delusions refer to certain beliefs a person can have that have no factual basis. This is why they are seen by others as being delusional.

People with schizophrenia can firmly believe in certain things, such as that someone is trying to kill them, or a person is deeply in love with them, or a major disaster is going to happen and people need to act fast, or that they are famous or have amazing abilities to do a particular thing.

Lack of Interest or Motivation

People with schizophrenia do not act normally and this shows in how they often neglect personal hygiene or respond to triggers in odd ways. They can lack motivation or interest in anything and are prone to withdraw from others.

Incoherent Thoughts and Speech

Incoherent speech often results from disorganized and fragmented thoughts. This is typical among individuals suffering from schizophrenia. Their impaired cognition disables them from thinking straight or clearly.

Their ability to concentrate is greatly diminished. As a result, it can be very difficult to follow their train of thought. They can mix things up and get things out of order.

Abnormal Behaviors

People with schizophrenia may resist doing certain things or lack a normal reaction or response to whatever is being said to them. They can do things excessively, in ways that are not at all necessary, which causes other people to wonder what they are doing, and why.

How to Treat Schizophrenia

Getting treatment is necessary for anyone with schizophrenia.

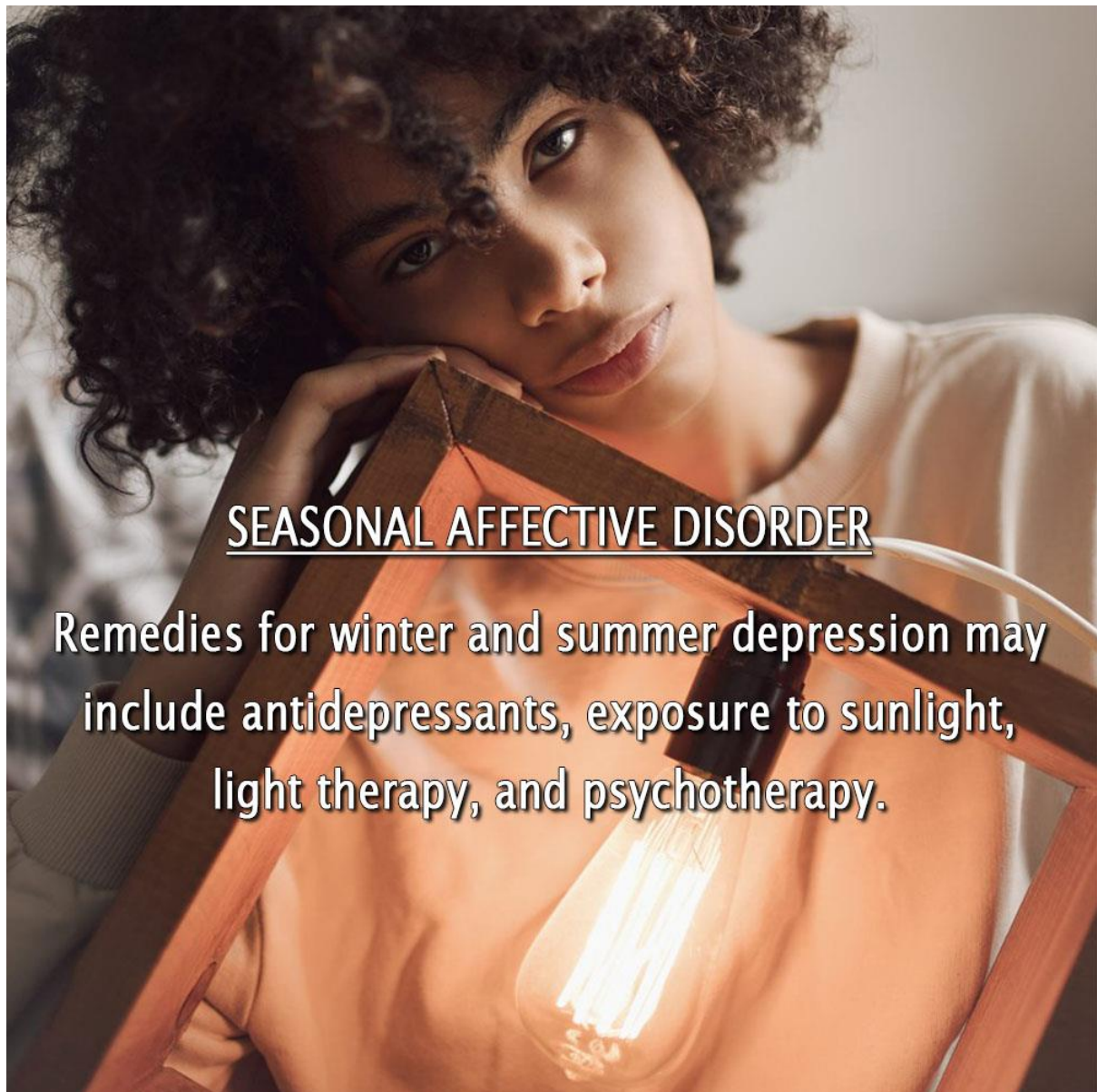
In some cases, a person with schizophrenia may develop negative thoughts, which could lead to not only irrational behavior but may also cause them serious physical harm or death, if their extreme thoughts lead to suicide.

People who are suffering from schizophrenia usually have very reduced awareness of the abnormality of their symptoms, nor are they aware that these signs may indicate a mental illness. Close family or concerned friends can and should encourage a person displaying the stated behaviors to seek help.

An essential step is obtaining a professional diagnosis of their condition. People who are diagnosed with schizophrenia have opportunities to live life normally, with appropriate treatment and management.

Knowing someone who may be suffering from schizophrenia is not easy, but if you can lead them to help, that is a huge step in the right direction. Understandably, this is not an easy task to do, but this condition needs to be properly managed with the right treatment and intervention.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) - Symptoms and Causes



SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

Remedies for winter and summer depression may include antidepressants, exposure to sunlight, light therapy, and psychotherapy.

During the colder months, it's easy to feel down and miserable because of the necessity to stay indoors. This feeling can persist for weeks or months, and unfortunately, many people can't help feeling the winter blues. Why is that?

Seasonal affective disorder is recognizable because it is experienced mostly during the winter months, due to shorter days and less sunlight. Seasonal affective disorder (SAD), also called seasonal depression, can affect anybody during the same season every year.

There are two types of this disorder. The fall onset of SAD is called the winter depression. It arises during late fall and lasts through the winter months. While the spring onset is a rare case of SAD called summer depression. It can happen from late spring until early summer.

SAD Symptoms

If you feel you may be someone who experiences SAD, there are symptoms you can look out for. You may have negative displays of emotion such as being sad or down most days, cranky, listless, and anxious. You may isolate yourself from family and friends and lose interest in social activities.

Less daylight may make you oversleep and feel lethargic during the day. You have decreased productivity because you find it hard to wake up early in the morning and stay alert during the daytime. You lack mental clarity and are unable to focus and concentrate on your tasks.

Because you easily feel tired, you also may develop low energy levels. You may develop cravings for starchy foods and sweet treats. If your appetite increases, it may cause overeating and unwanted weight gain. People who develop winter SAD recover quickly in about a week or so when spring finally comes around.

Causes of Seasonal Affective Disorder

The exact cause of this disorder is unknown, however, it is believed that hormonal irregularities in the brain caused by changes in the season trigger seasonal affective disorder. These hormonal changes cause corresponding attitude-related changes.

Since the days are longer during summer, and you wake earlier and go to bed later, and there is less sunlight during winter, which makes you sleep longer, your internal body clock is disrupted.

This biological clock regulates our hormones, mood, and sleep. When it shifts because of the changes in seasons, you have difficulty adjusting to daylight length. Therefore, feeling down is experienced.

Here are some more of the common causes of SAD.

Melatonin Overload

Darkness or lack of sunlight during fall and winter may induce the body to overproduce melatonin. It is the hormone that signals your body to sleep. So, doing your usual activities is hard because you always feel sleepy and lethargic.

Reduced Serotonin Levels

Less sunlight causes serotonin levels to drop. These are the brain chemicals our nerve cells produce and contribute to feelings of happiness. This brain chemical imbalance can affect mood and result in feelings of lethargy, depression, and other symptoms.

Insufficient Vitamin D

Vitamin D is known as the sunlight vitamin. So we benefit more from Vitamin D when there is plenty of sunlight. If your skin is exposed more to sunlight, it helps boost your serotonin activity, which is your defense against depression.

However, people typically become deficient in vitamin D during winter. A lack of this vitamin from foods and supplements can trigger stress, anxiety, or depression in some people.

In Summary

People experiencing seasonal affective disorder (SAD) should not ignore the symptoms mentioned above because it can worsen just like any other type of depression or anxiety disorder. It can lead to work or school problems, substance abuse, social withdrawal, and negative thoughts and behaviors.

You can stop your symptoms from getting worse by managing the symptoms from their onset. Remedies for winter and summer depression may include antidepressants, exposure to sunlight, light therapy, and psychotherapy. It's best to talk to your healthcare provider so they can help you or the people you care about who are suffering from SAD.

Social Anxiety Disorder - It's Not Just About Being Shy



Are you someone who has trouble talking to strangers or starting conversations?

Do you have difficulty speaking in public? What about making eye contact? Is that hard for you to do?

If you answered yes to these questions, don't think that you're just inherently shy. You could be suffering from social anxiety disorder.

Also known as social phobia, social anxiety disorder is a mental health condition. It is a forceful, tenacious fear of being observed and judged by others. This dread of judgment can disturb your work, affect your school life, and will have negative influences on your daily activities. It can also adversely affect your social life and your ability to keep lasting friendships.

Indicators

If you have this disorder, you may exhibit the following signs.

- Excessive blushing, sweating, and trembling, especially when in front of many people.
- You feel a quick heart rate, or constantly experience mental blocks.
- You experience queasiness or the feeling of a stomach ache.
- Displaying a stiff physical carriage, having little eye contact, lowering your eyes in public, or speaking with an exceedingly soft voice and people continually say you speak too softly.
- Scared to be with other people, especially those you don't already know.
- Extremely self-conscious in front of other people, feeling embarrassed and awkward.
- Fearful that other people will judge you and not like you.

Some of the Causes

Many parts of the brain are tangled in fear and anxiety. The misinterpretation of other people's actions can trigger you to feel distressed and anxious. For instance, you may have the perception that people are staring at you, or you feel that they don't like you when they probably feel none of those things.

Immature social skills are also another contributor to social anxiety. For example, if you have weak social skills, you may feel dispirited after talking with people and may become apprehensive about doing it again in the future.

Talk To A Professional

The first thing that you need to do to resolve your social phobia is to talk to a healthcare professional about your symptoms.

Your doctor will conduct an examination and inquire about your health history to see if there may be a distinct physical issue causing your symptoms. Your doctor may send you to a mental health specialist, such as a therapist, psychologist, clinical social worker, or counselor.

The diagnosis must be made by a medical practitioner and not just by you because you might be wrong with your perceptions of what you think you are feeling.

Self-Help Strategies

Having a social anxiety disorder does not mean you are stuck with it for life. There are different treatment options available. There are pharmacological interventions (drugs) and there are also psychological interventions (cognitive and behavioral approaches).

However, if you want to take steps to solve your problem on your own, there are also ways to do that.

Here are some suggestions on how you can conquer social anxiety without spending too much or involving other people.

'Know Thy Enemy'

For you to make a successful attempt at helping yourself, you need to know the enemy. This is one of the key principles in Lao Tzu's book entitled *The Art of War*. Trying to overcome a social phobia is a battle in itself, so you've got to know your opponent and what you're up against.

Examine yourself. With deliberate effort, try to get to the bottom of your specific fear. For instance, why are you afraid of speaking in public? Or why can't you bring yourself to approach someone and strike up a conversation? Why do you feel awkward looking someone straight in the eye?

Be determined to know 'why' you have these problems, and don't overthink that people don't like you or they are talking about you behind your back.

Once you're successful in knowing what's causing your apprehensions, you will know what to do to surmount the problem. It's not going to be easy and it's not going to be accomplished overnight. However, if you make that one small step of knowing the enemy, then you have won half the battle already.

Confront Your Fear

Eleanor Roosevelt once said that you need to look fear in the face and say, "*I have lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.*" What she's saying is that you must do the things you think you cannot do.

Where possible, avoid huge challenges that might have (from your perspective) devastating consequences. But continually challenge yourself to move beyond your comfort zone. Regular practice will provide desensitization, and former triggers will have less and less impact.

Have Courage

It is not easy to confront your own fears, especially if this has been with you for a very long time. But if you really want to get on with your life, then you have to exert effort, spend time, and be prepared for the 'battle.'

Wrestling against your fear takes more than deliberate intention. It takes courage, but especially perseverance. Don't expect to 'win' every time, and don't let setbacks stop you from moving forward and trying again.

Do celebrate your minor victories, if only to yourself. It is by persistently stacking these small wins that you will one day be pleasantly shocked that you are now easily doing things that once caused trepidation and distress.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Help for Anxiety Disorders



Do you have anxiety and panic attacks? A debilitating fear that interferes with your everyday life, especially the enjoyment of it?

Or do people see you as someone with neurotic tendencies thereby isolating you from the rest?

If you are suffering from any type of anxiety disorder, don't feel abandoned and alone. There is help available.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Unlike common anxiety medications, CBT can unearth the primary causes of your apprehensions and extreme distress. It allows you to acquire new perspectives in less frightening ways, leading to better problem-solving skills.

CBT's predominant goal is to alter patterns of thinking and subsequent behavior that lurk inside our minds and affect our relationship with the world at large.

This healing approach can be employed when someone has sleep-related problems, relationship issues, suffers from life-threatening depression, or worries excessively.

It is also used to discover the hidden reasons why someone gets trapped in substance abuse resulting in the degradation of their quality of life or even death.

The Many Faces Of CBT

Cognitive behavioral therapy has many approaches, all designed to suit the needs and preferences of individuals. Below are common techniques being used by therapists on people who participate in CBT.

Thought Diaries or Thought Records

This is a candid approach that probes into undesirable perceptions frequently linked to anxiety disorders.

In this method, a CBT participant is requested to jot down their:

- damaging views and feelings,
- the scenario in which the thought or feeling was held,
- the sentiments associated with the thought,
- if there was an attempt to cope and what these attempts were,
- the ensuing outcome of the situation.

This approach is exceedingly helpful in identifying the specific scenarios which led to the unease and the corresponding practices that will help in alleviating the problem.

Interpersonal Therapy

Also known as IPT, the method is conducted in a few sessions that investigate the underlying issues that are triggering the anguish of the person, then develop a course of action to address the source of pain.

This technique explicitly holds that interpersonal issues, such as having difficulty with a superior or continuing conflict with a family member, are linked to inner symptoms.

Subsequently, psychoanalysts and counselors provide their clients with interpersonal skills to help them with their current difficulties which can improve the client's sources of social support.

Modern Exposure Therapy

This therapy, used to treat people with fixated fears, utilizes a healing tactic known as *systematic desensitization*. In this method, therapists methodically expose their clients to the target of their fear in increasing degrees.

For instance, a person with an extreme fear of snakes will be initially shown photos of snakes. The therapist will progress to showing the person a fake snake, then ultimately show them a real snake.

Finally, the phobic person will be asked to go near the snake, and then touch it. In this final process, the person with snake phobia is led to relax their muscles until there is a feeling of tranquility and eventually, the fear subsides.

Anxiety First-Aid

Not everyone can afford to engage in a cognitive behavioral therapy session.

Also, it may be the case that you can't immediately access this remedy at the time you need it. So, what can you do when a CBT therapist is not available for you?

Providing there is no physical danger, face your fears and confront your anxiety head-on. Push past your fear/comfort zone as much as you are able.

If you keep on dodging and sidestepping situations that scare you or make you anxious, you are very likely avoiding doing things that you need to do; the things that will contribute to future success, happiness and personal growth.

If this happens, you won't be able to prove to yourself if, or not, the situation is really as bad as you expect it to be, so you miss opportunities.

It has been proven that anxiety problems increase when you get into an avoidance pattern. Where you safely can, expose yourself to your fear or the thing that makes you anxious, and you'll usually discover that it wasn't really what you think it is.

Conclusion

When we feel 'different', it is greatly reassuring to realize that there are indeed many others who are like us, and many who have gone before.

Where we may have once felt shame for how we felt, or how we compulsively responded to stimuli, we can now understand that our feelings are much more commonly experienced than we realized.

Mental health concerns should not be trivialized. Left unaddressed, resultant expression can be devastating for individuals and communities.

With proper intervention, many people suffering from mental and emotional conditions can change their lives. They can go from living in fear or lack of control to being more healthily expressive and fully-functioning beings.

There is no one simple solution to what is too complex an arena to be treated glibly or simplistically. Some people, armed only with increased knowledge and understanding, may be able to transform their lives by themselves.

Others will certainly require outside assistance. The bottom line is that it is no longer appropriate, when help is available, to ignore that help and continue living a less happy and fulfilling life than you could be.