

"MENTAL ILLNESS: AN INVISIBLE TRAUMA"

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What Is Mental Illness?

A mental health disorder is defined as any condition that affects a person's thoughts, behaviors or moods. While some mental health disorders last for a limited period, others are chronic and lifelong. When these issues cause high levels of stress or affect their daily functioning or relationships, treatment may be necessary to help a person manage their symptoms.

Common Mental Illnesses

ANXIETY DISORDERS are a group of mental disorders characterized by significant feelings of anxiety and fear AMYGDALA: may play a role in anxiety disorders involving very distinct fears HIPPOCAMPUS: is the part of the brain that encodes threatening events into memories EXAMPLES: Panic Disorder, Phobias	Psychotic Disorders severe disorders that cause abnormal thinking and perceptions hallucinations talking incoherently agitation Example: Schizophrenia	Mood disorders characterized by the severe changes of a person's mood Examples: Depression, Bipolar
SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS a condition in which the use of one or more substances leads to clinically significant impairment or distress EXAMPLES: Alcohol Use, Opioid Use	PERSONALITY DISORDERS a maladaptive pattern of behaviours causing long-term difficulty functioning in society. Personality disorders tend to be an integral part of a person, and therefore, are difficult to treat or "cure." EXAMPLES: Borderline, Dissociative Identity	Eating Disorders a range of psychological disorders characterized by abnormal or disturbed eating habits 20 million women and 10 million men in America will have an eating disorder at some point in their lives Examples: Anorexia, Bulimia

Diagnosing Mental Illness

Physicians will typically check for related complications while diagnosing a mental health disorder and perform:

- ✓ Physical exams to rule out any physical problems that could be causing the symptoms
- ✓ Lab tests to evaluate body processes or screen for alcohol and drugs
- ✓ Psychological evaluation to assess mental illness symptoms, thoughts, feelings and behavior patterns

Causes of Mental Illness

Although the exact cause of most mental illnesses is unknown, most develop as the result of a combination of biological, psychological and environmental factors.

Some mental illnesses have been linked to abnormal functioning of the brain due to chemical imbalances, injuries or developmental abnormalities. Mental illnesses sometimes run in families, suggesting that genetics also plays a role. Other links to mental health disorders include:

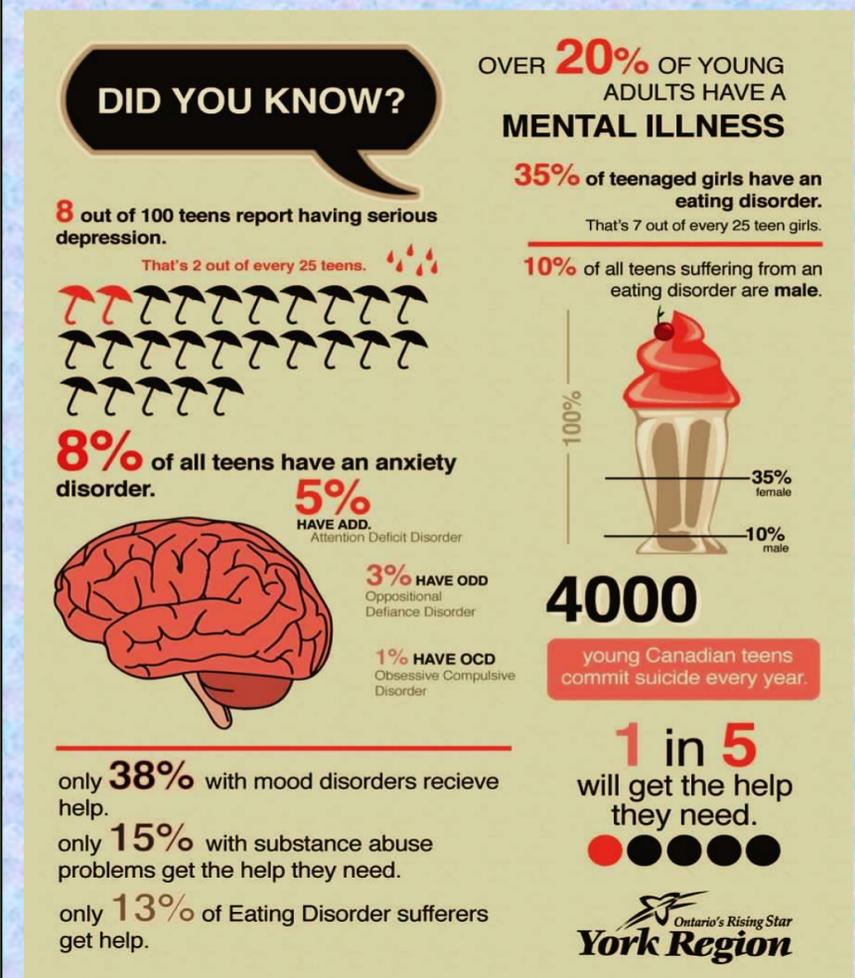
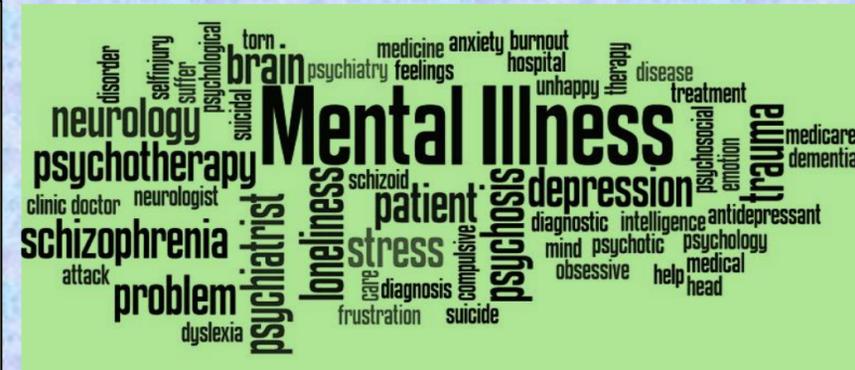
- ✓ Long-term substance abuse
- ✓ Poor nutrition and exposure to toxins
- ✓ Undergoing severe psychological trauma as a child, including emotional, physical or sexual abuse
- ✓ Death or divorce
- ✓ Dysfunctional family life
- ✓ Feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, anxiety, anger or loneliness
- ✓ Social or cultural expectations
- ✓ Substance abuse

Mental Illness Stigma

Some individuals still view mental illnesses as threatening. These views can lead to various forms of exclusion and discrimination for people with mental health problems.

Some of the additional harmful effects of stigma can include:

- ✓ Reluctance to seek help or treatment
- ✓ Lack of understanding by family, friends, co-workers or others
- ✓ Trouble securing housing
- ✓ Bullying, physical violence or harassment



Mental Health Treatment

Treatments may vary depending on the type of mental health disorder a person has. However, mental health care almost always involves some form of psychiatric counseling. Medications may also be prescribed.

