

# Let's Learn About Mental Illnesses!

It is **so important** to learn about mental illnesses and how they affect people because by having an **understanding** of them, they are less likely to be judged.

**Mental illnesses** are just that, illnesses: illnesses that require treatment to get better just like any other, like taking cold medicine to get rid of a runny nose.

Let's take a look at the major mental illnesses one by one. The more we learn about them, the less stigma there will be!

Mental illness does not discriminate. They can affect anybody, including celebrities!

By speaking out, by speaking your truth, you not only help to reduce stigma, judgment, and shame, but also you will be able to get the help you need so that you can begin to feel better and live the greatest life you can live. There's nothing wrong with that!

## Depression

Most likely you have heard of depression at some point. "I'm so depressed" is a common phrase, but it doesn't always refer to what the mental illness actually is.

### When you have depression, you may:

- Feel intense sadness, emptiness, hopelessness, or irritability for at least two weeks.
- Stop caring about doing the things you used to love to do.
- Eat too much or too little.
- Sleep too much or too little.
- Feel really draggy with no energy.
- Feel worthless or feel guilty about things for no real reason.
- Find that thinking and concentrating are really hard.
- Have thoughts about harming yourself.

**It's hard to live with depression.** Imagine feeling sad and heavy much of the time. Even taking a shower can become difficult. But if you feel these things, it is so important to ask for help.

There is nothing wrong with you as a person if you have depression, just like there is nothing wrong with you if you have diabetes and need to take insulin. You have an illness that requires treatment so that you can begin to feel better. There are a number of famous people who live with depression. Some of them include Kristen Bell, Jim Carrey, Ellen DeGeneres, Eminem, Lady Gaga, Katy Perry, JK Rowling, and Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson.



## Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar Disorder is a mental illness that consists of **big ups** and **big downs** of mood and behaviour.

Imagine that your mood is on a big rollercoaster. Bipolar Disorder is made of manic (or hypomanic) and depressive episodes.

**Manic episodes** are the high points of the roller coaster. You may;

- Feel like you are the king or queen of the world.
- Not feel like sleeping at all.
- Have thoughts that feel like they're going thousands of miles an hour.
- Get involved in silly activities that you feel like you cannot stop and could get you in real trouble.

**Depressive episodes** are the low point of the roller coaster.

- You already learned the symptoms of depression (See first page).

Then you might start over again with a manic phase, then over and over again. These symptoms and how quickly the moods change are not the same for everyone. It's quite complicated.

Some people with Bipolar Disorder are Bebe Rexha, Demi Lovato, Mariah Carey, Carrie Fisher, Halsey, Kanye West, Winston Churchill, and Selena Gomez.

## Anxiety

An Anxiety Disorder is a mental illness that involves **extreme worry** and behaviours related to that worry.

Types of anxiety disorders include Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Social Anxiety Disorder, Panic Disorder, etc.

**Worry is a normal emotion when we feel fear or concern.** But for some people, that kind of worry can get really extreme, so much so that it interferes with how you live your life.

People with an anxiety disorder have symptoms such as;

- Extreme worry for at least six months.
- Finding it hard to control your anxiety.
- For young people, you could feel edgy, easily tired, have a hard time concentrating, feel irritable, have muscle tension, or have trouble with sleep.



People with an Anxiety Disorder include Oprah Winfrey, Stephen Colbert, Kourtney Kardashian, Kristen Stewart, Adele, Kim Kardashian West, and Miley Cyrus.

## Panic Disorder

Panic Disorder, a kind of **Anxiety Disorder**, is a mental illness that has as its main symptom panic attacks.

A **panic attack** is a burst of intense fear or worry that can feel like it grows to an intense level. It feels like there is something really wrong with your body when in reality, your body is just fine. Your mind is helping to produce these very uncomfortable symptoms because your mind is convinced something awful is about to happen – even though it isn't.

Some symptoms include;

- Feeling your heart pounding.
- Excess sweating.
- Feeling like it is hard to breathe (even though your breathing isn't at risk).
- Nausea and dizziness.
- Feeling chilly or really hot.
- Numbness.
- Feeling like you're just going crazy. But you're not going crazy.

**Please reach out for help if you have these symptoms.** There are ways to help you feel better. Now, if you worry so much about having a Panic Attack that this new worry feels out of control, or that you worry so much that you change your behaviour in big ways just to avoid having a panic attack, then you are likely to have Panic Disorder.

People that have panic attacks or panic disorder include Amanda Seyfried (of "Mamma Mia"), musician John Mayer, Oprah Winfrey, Emma Stone, Ellie Goulding, and Ariana Grande.

## Agoraphobia

Agoraphobia is another kind of **anxiety disorder**. People are diagnosed with this when they are **unable to leave their homes** in different situations.

For example, if you have Agoraphobia you may feel;

- Really scared of using public transportation.
- Scared of being in open spaces (like driving over bridges or being in a parking lot) or being in enclosed places, such as shops or movie theaters.
- Standing in line or being in a crowd.
- Just being outside of the home alone.



If a person with Agoraphobia experiences stuff like I said above, they are likely to feel intensely fearful or anxious. They may feel an incredible need to escape their situation because they feel so terrible. But actually, they are not in any actual danger, but their minds convince them that this is so.

If you have this illness, it simply needs good treatment to take away the symptoms. People with Agoraphobia include TV chef Paula Deen, actress Kim Basinger, actor Macaulay Culkin, Emma Stone, poet Emily Dickinson, singer John Mellencamp, and singer Carly Simon.

### Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

OCD is a mental illness that involves obsessions and compulsions. **Obsessions** are constant thoughts or images you really don't want to have but have them anyway. **Compulsions** are behaviours or thoughts that you repeat over and over, usually as a reaction to an obsession.

Ex. An obsession could be that you are afraid your house will fall down if you don't tap each door of your house three times each day. The thought about your house falling down becomes an obsession because the thought or image is always on your mind. The compulsion is the tapping on the doors to prevent this terrible thing from happening.

**When these obsessions cause you a lot of stress and anxiety, and you try really hard to make these thoughts or images go away, these are symptoms of OCD.** So, the reality is that counting or tapping is not going to stop the imagined fear of the terrible things that could happen. These obsessions and compulsions take up a lot of a person's time and it makes it hard to live everyday life.

People who have struggled with OCD include Daniel Radcliffe (Harry Potter), Frank Sinatra (Jazz icon), Leonardo DiCaprio and Cameron Diaz.

### Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

PTSD is a mental illness that involves symptoms that occur **when someone suffers a trauma**. A trauma is a very scary and terrible event. This is a very complicated mental illness and many people have it. But know there is treatment out there for you.

PTSD is developed by;

- Being somewhere where something **really scary** happens, like actual or the threat of being hurt by directly experiencing it.
- You may watch something really terrifying as it occurs.
- You may learn that the scary event happened to a loved one.
- Or, you may have to hear the details of the **terrifying event** over and over again.



Symptoms of PTSD include;

- Uncontrollable, repeated memories and nightmares of the terrifying event.
- Flashbacks, which are moments where you feel like the scary event is happening again.
- Becoming incredibly upset when reminded of something related to the terrifying event, or you may find yourself avoiding certain things or places that may remind you of the terrifying event.
- Having problems remembering things about the terrifying event.
- Being really reactive, meaning feeling super irritable with outbursts, being really super edgy (like if someone taps you on the shoulder and you jump hard).
- Having problems concentrating.
- Having problems going to or staying asleep.

Dealing with trauma is tough but know many people have and are able to recover from it. Trauma must always be taken seriously. Reach out if you have any of the above symptoms. People with PTSD include Ariana Grande, Whoopi Goldberg, Monica Seles (tennis champ), Lady Gaga, and Charlize Theron.

## Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is a mental illness that is a **psychotic disorder**. A psychotic disorder always involves the symptom of psychosis. You may have heard of it. It is when you are unable to tell what is real and what is not.

For example, for people with Schizophrenia, they may have features called delusions and hallucinations. Let me explain them to you.

- **A delusion** is when a person believes something to be true that can simply not be true. Like calling the sky a big triangle. This is called a fixed belief because it won't change no matter how hard someone else tries to prove it wrong. Some delusions are persecutory (that is, thinking that people may be after you even though they're really not) or grandiose (that a person thinks he or she is the greatest dancer in the world even though they have never danced in their lives).
- **Hallucinations** are when a person may see or hear things that are not really there. Many people with schizophrenia hear voices that aren't really there and these voices cannot be controlled.

Other symptoms of Schizophrenia include;

- Having disorganized thinking (this is when their thoughts might not make any sense, jump from one topic to another really quickly, and leave the listener feeling confused).
- Seeming uncontrollably silly or incredibly agitated to others.



- Sometimes just doing the things a person needs to do every day (like showering, cooking for oneself) might be difficult or not performed at all. Some people just stop doing everything for themselves.
- Sometimes having trouble showing their emotions through their facial expressions and how they talk.
- They may not be motivated to work or be social.

**It's a really complicated mental illness.** It's obvious to see that everyday life is very much affected by the above symptoms.

People with schizophrenia include Eduard Einstein (son of Albert Einstein), comedian Darrell Hammond, clinical psychologist Rufus May, mathematician John Hash (of "A Beautiful Mind"), Vincent Van Gogh, musician Brian Wilson (of "the Beach Boys"), and Aaron Carter. It's hard to live with schizophrenia but again, know there is treatment for this mental illness there is no reason to suffer in silence.

