

Psychosis



This factsheet provides a description of psychosis, its symptoms and the treatments and support options.

What is psychosis?

Psychosis or 'psychotic' are widely misunderstood terms. Psychosis can be a symptom in a number of mental health conditions. It describes phenomena that other people don't experience or share. This might include seeing or hearing things, or holding unusual beliefs.

The effect of psychosis is to create a difference between the person with psychotic experiences from the rest of their family or community, as their reality does not coincide with other people's reality. As a result, psychosis can be very distressing and disruptive, not just for the individual, but for other people around them. It can have a major impact on everyday life, relationships and employment.

Psychotic experiences can be like 'waking dreams' or nightmares, feeling as real and intense.

Symptoms of psychosis

- 'Loss of insight', ie the person may not be able to accept or understand that they are ill – their sense of reality is as real as that of those in a non-psychotic state
- Abnormal ideas which often gives rise to problems in the community
- Hallucinations and delusions
- Often alienated from those around them because it is difficult for outsiders to empathise with the condition
- Psychosis tends to involve whole personality of the patient
- Changes in emotion and thinking

Causes of psychosis

Psychosis can be a symptom of:

- Schizophrenia
- Manic depression
- Severe depression
- Drug use - drug-induced psychosis
- Physical/organic illness

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Treatment for psychosis

Treatment depends on the individual and the cause of the psychosis. As the first signs of psychosis often manifest in late teens, early twenties, early intervention and treatment is important; this can prevent the development of a full-blown mental health condition.

Sometimes it is necessary for the individual to be cared for in a hospital to ensure safety. Medication is often used to control symptoms.

Therapy, eg CBT can be useful; it can help the individual identify potential triggering factors or stressors and also how to manage these. The ability to make use of therapy can depend on the amount of insight the individual has into the illness.

Where can I find help and support?

One-to-one support:

- Helpline: 0300 304 7000 (4.30pm – 10.30pm every day)
- Email: http://www.sane.org.uk/what_we_do/support/email/
- Textcare: http://www.sane.org.uk/what_we_do/support/textcare/

Peer support:

- Support Forum: http://www.sane.org.uk/what_we_do/support/supportforum/

Details can be found on our website at www.sane.org.uk

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