



My Mind

We talk about physical health and having good and not so good days. Sometimes physical health problems can be short-term or long-term. Our mental health is very similar to this. Just as the early detection of physical problems help to prevent ongoing or the worsening of symptoms, so does the early detection of mental health problems.

Certain things can make people more vulnerable than others to developing mental health problems such as:

- Having a family history of mental illness
- Trauma
- Being in a negative environment where there is a lot of conflict and criticism
- Drug or alcohol use
- Stressful situations which occur day to day

Like your physical health there are protective factors which can help reduce mental health problems and help prevent any symptoms from coming back:

- Healthy diet, regular exercise and adequate rest and sleep
- Good social supports
- Healthy outlets for stress and anger
- Effective communication
- Medication
- Planning ahead for difficult times
- Identifying early signs

Depression

Everyone experiences feeling down, sad or blue from time to time, especially after disappointments or loss. These feelings are a natural response to such situations and tend to pass after time. Depression can occur when feelings of sadness last longer than two weeks and start to impact on a number of areas of your life.

Non-melancholic depression is the most common (around 90%) also referred to as "clinical depression" and "major depression". People who suffer from this type of depression usually suffer from psychological distress like low self esteem, critical self talk and perfectionism. Physical symptoms include loss or increased appetite, sleep disturbance, low energy and low libido. Depression is treatable and with the help of counselling and medication you can be on the road to recovery.

Re Balance Your Lifestyle

Anxiety

Anxiety is a regular emotion and everyone has felt it from time to time. It can be described as a fear projected into the future which manifests in the body as increased alertness and awareness. So you might be nervous, agitated or worried about a project coming up at work. You might find yourself waking up at night thinking about the issue or with a list of things to do. Once the issue you have been fearful about is over, the anxiety will more than likely subside.

When you are experiencing anxiety you may be experiencing:

- An overwhelming sense of panic or anxiety for no apparent reason, it usually is reoccurring and it can appear irrational and intrusive
- You are faced with a common everyday occurrence such as getting into a car which on one hand you may feel is normal, safe and okay, however despite this, an overwhelming feeling of fear and panic sets in and you might start to notice physical symptoms like:
 - Racing heart
 - Sweating
 - Having difficulty breathing
 - Faintness

Psychosis

When you have experienced psychosis it appears very real to you, you may not understand why people disagree with you and this can be a really distressing thing. You may be experiencing symptoms such as:

- A disturbance in your thinking, where your thoughts seem jumbled and people tell you that you are not making sense.
- A delusion, which is a false belief. So this can be your thoughts- you may believe that someone is controlling you through your thoughts or can read/ hear your thoughts like they are being broadcasted. You may have a belief that someone wants to kill you or harm you in some way. You may see special "signs" or messages prophesying about a major event like the world ending.
- Hallucinations which can affect your five senses. That is, for example you may hear, see, taste, touch or smell something that others do not. It may sound like there is someone in the room next door, or that you see someone in the room with you. These are some of the most common hallucinations people will experience.

The main point about these beliefs is that they usually come on quite suddenly and are unusual so others will notice. Once you start to recover from your experiences you may be a little surprised by what you believed. If you are

Re Balance Your Lifestyle

experiencing a form of psychosis you're not alone. Many people have experienced psychosis and it can be treated. Once you experience a psychotic episode, it's important to remember to seek help. The longer you let the episode persist the slower the recovery and the more persistent the symptoms.

Drugs such as speed, ice, cocaine, ecstasy, cannabis and hallucinogens can sometimes trigger a pre-existing psychotic illness (such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder) in some people and can cause drug induced psychosis in others. If you have experienced a psychotic episode whilst using substances before, it is likely that you will experience them the more you use these drugs, even if it is a small amount.

Getting your head around it 2009 A Dual Diagnosis Workbook
The Black Dog Institute website- Depression and Bipolar Disorder Information Australia
Treatment Protocol Project (2004). **Management of Mental Disorders** (Fourth Edition). Sydney WHO Collaborating
Centre for Evidence in Mental Health Policy.