

"Can You See Me?" Campaign: Psychosis Help Sheet

Understanding Psychosis

Psychosis is a mental health condition characterized by a loss of touch with reality. People experiencing psychosis may have hallucinations, delusions, disorganized thinking, and impaired insight. Psychosis can occur as a result of various factors, including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, severe depression, substance abuse, or medical conditions.

Signs and Symptoms of Psychosis

1. **Hallucinations:** Sensory experiences that occur without external stimuli, such as hearing voices, seeing things that aren't there, or feeling sensations on the skin.
2. **Delusions:** False beliefs that are firmly held despite evidence to the contrary, such as believing one has special powers, is being persecuted, or is being controlled by external forces.
3. **Disorganized Thinking:** Difficulty organizing thoughts or expressing them coherently, leading to speech that may be difficult to follow or illogical.
4. **Disorganized Behavior:** Engaging in behavior that is unusual, unpredictable, or socially inappropriate.
5. **Impaired Insight:** Lack of awareness or recognition that one's thoughts or perceptions are abnormal or that they need help.
6. **Social Withdrawal:** Avoidance of social interactions or isolation from others due to fear, paranoia, or confusion.
7. **Emotional Disturbance:** Fluctuations in mood, ranging from intense fear and anxiety to apathy and emotional numbness.

Causes of Psychosis

1. **Mental Health Conditions:** Psychosis can be a symptom of psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, severe depression with psychotic features, or schizoaffective disorder.
2. **Substance Abuse:** Drug-induced psychosis can occur as a result of substance misuse, including stimulants (such as methamphetamine or cocaine), hallucinogens (such as LSD or PCP), or cannabis.
3. **Medical Conditions:** Certain medical conditions, such as brain tumors, neurological disorders, or infections, can lead to psychosis.
4. **Trauma or Stress:** Severe stress or trauma, such as experiencing a traumatic event or undergoing significant life changes, can trigger psychotic symptoms in susceptible individuals.

What to Do If You or Someone You Know is Experiencing Psychosis

1. **Seek Professional Help:** If you or someone you know is experiencing psychosis, seek help from a mental health professional, such as a psychiatrist, psychologist, or psychiatric nurse practitioner.
2. **Emergency Services:** If the person is in immediate danger to themselves or others, or if their behavior is severely disorganized or erratic, call emergency services or go to the nearest emergency room for assistance.
3. **Provide Support:** Offer reassurance, comfort, and a non-judgmental presence to the person experiencing psychosis. Encourage them to seek professional help and offer to accompany them to appointments if needed.
4. **Reduce Stress:** Create a calm and supportive environment, free from unnecessary stressors or triggers. Encourage activities that promote relaxation and well-being, such as gentle exercise, mindfulness, or listening to soothing music.
5. **Encourage Medication Adherence:** If prescribed medication, encourage the person to take their medication as directed by their healthcare provider. Medication can help alleviate psychotic symptoms and stabilize mood.
6. **Educate Yourself:** Learn more about psychosis and the underlying causes to better understand what the person is experiencing and how you can best support them.

Resources for Support and Information

1. **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):** Provides education, support groups, and resources for individuals and families affected by psychosis and other mental health conditions. <https://www.nami.org/>
Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America (SARDAA): Offers support, advocacy, and education for individuals living with schizophrenia and related disorders. <https://sardaa.org/>
Early Psychosis Intervention Programs: Many communities have specialized programs for early identification and intervention in psychosis. Contact your local mental health authority or community health center for information on available services.

Remember, psychosis is treatable, and recovery is possible with the right support, treatment, and resources. You are not alone, and help is available.

Together, we can navigate psychosis. You are seen, you are heard, and you are valued.

