

Psychosis

What is psychosis?

Psychosis is a general term to describe a mental health issue in which a young person experiences changes in thinking, perception, mood and behaviour which can severely disrupt their life. For a young person experiencing psychosis, friendships and relationships can be difficult to initiate and maintain. It can also significantly affect their ability to look after themselves and fully concentrate and engage with activities at school.

The main psychotic diagnoses are drug-induced psychosis, bipolar disorder (formerly manic depressive disorder), psychotic depression, and schizophrenia.

The onset of psychosis in childhood is rare. However, the rates of onset increase sharply during adolescence. Psychosis usually first emerges in young people between the ages of 15 and 30.

Signs and symptoms

Young people experience psychotic symptoms in different combinations and to different extents.

It is important to realise that psychosis is not a constant or static condition. At any given time, a young person may be experiencing severe symptoms, mild symptoms or none at all.

Delusions

Delusions are false beliefs. These can include beliefs of persecution, of guilt, of having a special mission or exalted birth or of being under outside control.

Hallucinations

These are false perceptions. Hallucinations most commonly involve hearing voices. They can also involve seeing, feeling, tasting or smelling things. These are perceived as very real by the young person experiencing them. Hallucinations can be very frightening. This is especially the case when voices make negative comments about the young person or contain unpleasant ideas.

Because the delusions and hallucinations are so real to those experiencing them it is unlikely they will want to consider an alternative explanation.

It is important to take into account people's cultural backgrounds and the possibility that delusions can derive from real experience (such as emotional trauma).

Thinking difficulties

There may be difficulties in concentration, memory and ability to plan. These make it more difficult for the young person to reason, communicate and complete daily tasks. These are also sometimes called cognitive impairments.

Psychosis organisations

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) www.nice.org.uk

- _ Psychosis and schizophrenia in children and young people (CG155) 2013 NICE clinical guidelines
- _ Psychosis with coexisting substance misuse (CG120) 2011 NICE clinical guidelines
- _ Bipolar disorder (CG38) 2006 NICE clinical guidelines

Rethink Mental Illness

www.rethink.org

Telephone: 0300 5000 927 (Weekdays 9:30 - 16:00)

Email: info@rethink.org/advice@rethink.org

Address: Rethink Mental Illness, 89 Albert Embankment, London, SE1 7TP

Rethink, is a national mental health membership charity. It works to help everyone affected by severe mental illness recover a better quality of life. Its aim is to make a practical and positive difference by providing hope and empowerment through effective services, information and support. Rethink carries out research which informs national mental health policy and actively campaigns for change through greater awareness and understanding.

IRIS

www.iris-initiative.org.uk

Initiative to Reduce the Impact of Schizophrenia (IRIS) campaigning for best practice in early psychosis. Download the European psychosis declaration at <http://www.irisinitiative.org.uk/the-early-psychosis-declaration/>

Sane/Saneline www.sane.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 304 7000 (16:30 - 22:30) A national out-of-hours helpline which provides support and information to anyone coping with mental illness. SANE is one of the UK's leading charities concerned with improving the lives of everyone affected by mental illness. It has a helpline which offers support and information to callers. The UK site offers extensive literature on subjects including schizophrenia, depression and therapies.

Hearing Voices Network www.hearing-voices.org Telephone: 0114 271

8210 Email: nhvn@hotmail.co.uk

Hearing Voices Network consists of 130 self-help groups in England and Scotland. These groups help voice-hearers through discussion of voice-hearing. HVN is also there to help carers and to support and advise voice-hearers.

bipolarUK www.bipolaruk.org

Telephone: 0333 323 3880 (Weekdays 9:00 - 17:00) Email: info@bipolaruk.org

A user-led charity working to enable people affected by bipolar disorder (manic depression) to take control of their lives. The organization provides support and advice for people with manic depression, their families and carers.

YoungMinds www.youngminds.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 802 5544 (Weekdays 9:30 - 16:00) Parent Email: parents@youngminds.org.uk for general enquiries: ymentquiries@youngminds.org.uk YoungMinds is the UK's leading charity committed to improving emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people and empowering their parents and carers.

Voice Collective www.voicecollective.co.uk

Telephone: 020 7911 0822 (Weekdays 9:00 - 17:00)

Email: info@voicecollective.co.uk

Peer Support for Young People Who Hear, See & Sense Things that Others Don't.

Hosted by Mind in Camden's Hearing Voices Project. This website contains information about voices, visions, coping, recovery, getting help in a crisis and peer support groups for young people aged 12 to 18. Created by Mind in Camden, the site contains useful information for carers as well as young people who are having these experiences.

Useful Apps: Psychosis

EMoods Bipolar Mood Tracker <http://emoodtracker.com/>

An app to help users track their moods, medication, sleep and other common symptoms related to bipolar disorder.

Actissist (Active assistance for psychological therapy)

<http://research.bmh.manchester.ac.uk/actissist/> One to watch; An app under development by the University of Manchester, which aims to deliver CBT informed strategies via mobile to people experiencing first episodes of psychosis.