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Contents

[The Basics of Mental Health 2](#_Toc184657888)

[Mental Health Is... 2](#_Toc184657889)

[Mental Illness Is... 2](#_Toc184657890)

[Why is mental health important for overall health? 3](#_Toc184657891)

[Are Mental Illnesses Common? (Spoiler Alert, Yes They Are) 3](#_Toc184657892)

[A Deep Dive Into Mental Health and Mental Illness 4](#_Toc184657893)

[Anxiety Disorders 4](#_Toc184657894)

[Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder 5](#_Toc184657895)

[Disruptive Behavioral Disorders 5](#_Toc184657896)

[Mood Disorders Such as Depression and Bipolar disorders 6](#_Toc184657897)

[Eating Disorders 7](#_Toc184657898)

[Personality Disorders 7](#_Toc184657899)

[Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) 8](#_Toc184657900)

[Schizophrenia Spectrum and Other Psychotic Disorders 8](#_Toc184657901)

[Substance Use Disorders 9](#_Toc184657902)

[Anxiety 10](#_Toc184657903)

[Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illnesses, affecting 18% of the population 10](#_Toc184657904)

# The Basics of Mental Health

## Mental Health Is...

Mental health is our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It is how we think, feel, and act. It helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. Just like our physical health, it is important to all people at any age group.

## Mental Illness Is...

Mental illnesses are conditions that affect a person’s thinking, feeling, mood or behavior in a way that impairs their ability to relate to others and function each day. Examples include MDD (depression) and schizophrenia. Poor mental health and mental illness are not the same thing. A person can experience poor mental health and not be diagnosed with a mental illness.

# Why is mental health important for overall health?

Mental and physical health are equally important components of overall health. Mental illness, especially depression, increases the risk for many types of physical health problems, particularly long-lasting conditions like stroke, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease. Similarly, the presence of chronic conditions can increase the risk factors and exacerbate the symptoms of mental illnesses like Depression or Bipolar Disorder.

## Are Mental Illnesses Common? (Spoiler Alert, Yes They Are)

More than 50% will be diagnosed with a mental illness or disorder at some point in their lifetime. 1 in 5 People will experience a mental illness in a given year. 1 in 5 children, either currently or at some point during their life, have had a seriously debilitating mental illness.

## A Deep Dive Into Mental Health and Mental Illness

People experience different types of mental health issues, and they can occur at the same time. Mental illnesses can occur in short bursts, or extended episodes, then subside. Mental illnesses can also be ongoing, chronic conditions. There are more than 200 types of mental illness. Some of the main types of mental illness and disorders, but we will cover a handful of them in this deep dive.

## Anxiety Disorders

People with anxiety disorders respond to certain objects or situations with fear, dread or terror. Sensory stimulus such as a smell or sound can trigger these negative responses as well. Anxiety disorders include generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety, panic disorders, and phobias.

# Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder

ADHD is one of the most common childhood mental disorders. It can continue through adolescence and adulthood. People diagnosed with ADHD may have trouble paying attention, controlling impulsive behaviors, or be overly active to the point of self detriment.

## Disruptive Behavioral Disorders

Behavioral disorders involve a pattern of disruptive behaviors in children that last for at least 6 months and cause problems in school, at home, and in social situations. Behavioral symptoms can also continue into adulthood, with the disruptive behavoirs becoming implusive to the point of serious self detriment.

# Mood Disorders Such as Depression and Bipolar disorders

While bad moods are common, and usually pass in a short period, people suffering from mood disorders live with more constant and severe symptoms. Their mood impacts both mental and psychological well-being, nearly every day. 1 in 10 adults suffer from some type of mood disorder, with the most common conditions being depression and bipolar disorder. If left untreated, this illness can affect role functioning, quality of life and many long-lasting physical health problems such as diabetes and heart disease. With proper diagnosis and treatment, most of those living with mood disorders lead healthy, normal and productive lives. Many go undiagnosed, making mental health awareness a social imperative.

## Eating Disorders

Eating disorders involve obsessive and sometimes distressing thoughts and behaviors concerning food and/or body image, including: • Reduction of food intake

* Overeating
* Feelings of depression or distress
* Concerns or delusions about weight, body shape, poor self-image (Body Dysmorphia)

Common types of eating disorders include anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating.

## Personality Disorders

People with personality disorders have extreme and inflexible personality traits that cause problems in work, school, or social relationships. Sharp and sudden personality changes can also be present. Personality disorders include antisocial personality disorder and borderline personality disorder (BPD).

## Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD can manifest after living through a traumatic event, such as war, a natural disaster, abuse, or a serious accident. PTSD can make someone feel stressed and afraid after the danger is over. People with PTSD may experience symptoms like reliving the traumatic event, sleep problems, suffer from panic attacks, paranoia, and changes in emotions. PTSD can cause irritability, emotional outbursts, helplessness, or feelings of numbness.

## Schizophrenia Spectrum and Other Psychotic Disorders

People with psychotic disorders hear, see, and believe things that aren’t real or true. They may also show signs of disorganized thinking, confused speech, and abnormal motor behavior. An example of a psychotic disorder is schizophrenia, which can also present disorganized motivation and emotions.

## Substance Use Disorders

Substance use disorders occur when frequent or repeated use of alcohol and/or drugs causes significant detriment, such as health problems, disability, and failure to meet major responsibilities. Substance use problems can be fatal to the user and put others at risk. Examples include drunk driving and overdoses. Mental illnesses and substance use disorders often occur together. Sometimes one disorder can be a contributing factor to or can make the other worse. Sometimes they simply occur at the same time.

# Anxiety

## Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illnesses, affecting 18% of the population

Anxiety is the most common mental illness out there, and it takes a lot of different forms. Experiencing some level of anxiety is a normal part of being human, but for people who have an anxiety disorder the worry or fear do not go away, and worsen over time. Some people experience generalized anxiety, where the negative thoughts and feelings are present in a variety of circumstances, while others experience social anxiety, anxiety in crowds, and sexual anxiety, just to name a few. Anxiety can cause intense and prolonged feelings of fear and distress that occur out of proportion to the threat or danger at hand. Thankfully, **anxiety is treatable**.

Each person is unique, and should explore their options and select for themselves the most effective coping mechanisms. That being said, many people have found successful treatment for anxiety through things like psychotherapy (often Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy), support groups, medication, spiritual and indigenous approaches to healing, and stress management and relaxation techniques.

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