

1. Psychoeducation & its Importance

What is Psychoeducation?

Psychoeducation is a special form of education, in which, persons having the illness and their caregivers are educated about various aspects of mental illness.

The aim of providing this education is to help persons with the illness and their caregivers to understand the illness, the need for treatment, prevention of relapse and the recovery process.

Why is it important for you and your family to receive psycho-education for First Episode Psychosis (FEP) ?

Psychoeducation is important because:

- ▶ Early diagnosis and treatment in initial period of the illness are very important for long term outcome.
- ▶ Delay in treatment may lead to the illness occurring again and again.
- ▶ In cases where there is prolonged delay in treatment, the illness may not improve completely even after treatment.

- ▶ Research has shown that early initiation of treatment has better outcome than not treating or delaying treatment in psychosis.
- ▶ Thus, psychoeducation will help you in understanding the need for treatment. Once you understand the need and benefits of treatment you are more likely to stay on regular treatment.
- ▶ In case the illness occurs again, knowledge of early signs and symptoms will help in early recognition of illness and early initiation of treatment. This reduces suffering and provides an opportunity to control the symptoms before they

become difficult to manage.

- ▶ This will also help you understand your experience of the illness.

- ▶ Psychoeducation will also help you cope with the illness and make necessary changes in your life in order to stay healthy.

- ▶ It will assist you in reconstructing and reorienting your life in order to re-engage with educational or vocational activities.

This booklet has information about various aspects of psychosis.



**When people with
psychosis have
knowledge about
the illness, they can
manage it better.**

2. What is First Episode Psychosis?

Case Scenario 1

A 22 year old man was brought to the Outpatient Department with a history of being irritable with family members and not sleeping properly for the past month.

His mother reported that for 1 month he had been insisting on being left alone. He refused to have dinner with his family members and appeared lost. When asked to perform his routine activities

like bathing or going to the market, he would get irritable and ask his parents to leave him alone.

For 2 weeks, he had not been going to his college saying that people there were threatening him. He was seen at times talking to himself and would get startled at the slightest of sound. His sleep had decreased to 2-3 hours.

He would pace around the house and appear frightened.



Since one week, he had been repeatedly checking the house for cameras and saying that people were following him. When family members tried to tell him that this was not the case, he got very angry and tried to leave the house.

His parents convinced him with difficulty and brought him to the hospital.

Case Scenario 2

A 25 year old lady was brought to the hospital by her husband with complaints of decreased sleep for the past 2 months.

Her sleep had decreased to 3-4 hours from her usual 7-8 hours. She felt lethargic throughout the day and had been eating only one meal a day, that too after insisting.

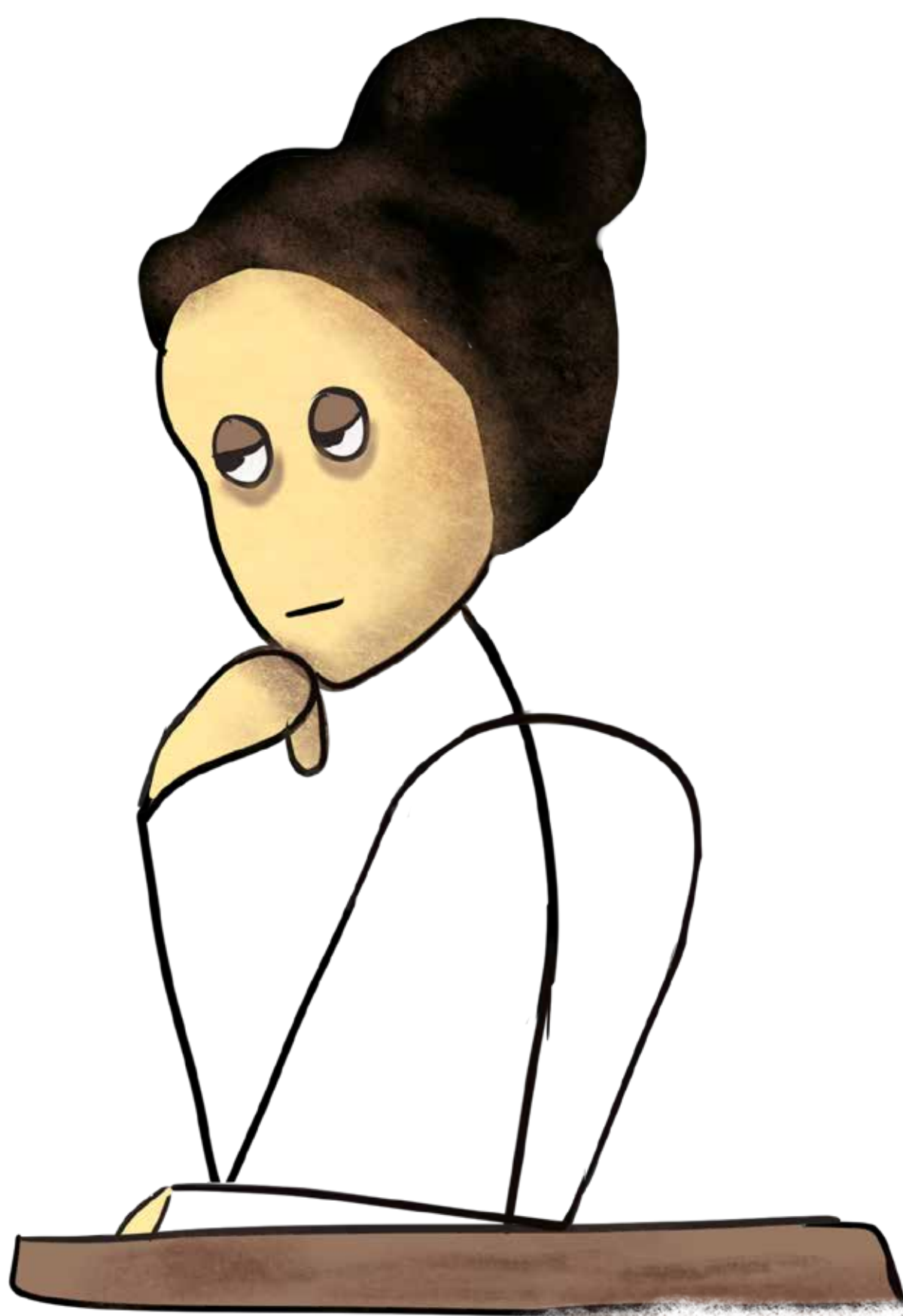
She felt unhappy most of the time and thought that the world was quite meaningless.

She was previously a jovial person but for the past 2 months she had not been enjoying the company of her

family and friends.

She had started feeling that she is of no use to the family and that things are never going to get better.

Her husband reported that she had been crying a lot, claiming that she was a sinner and had spoiled everyone's life. She felt she deserved to be punished and should end her life.



On being asked, the husband reported that his wife had been very humble, helpful and joyous.

But despite all efforts she was not convinced about the same and said that she must die as she has committed so many sins and has led to her family's misery.



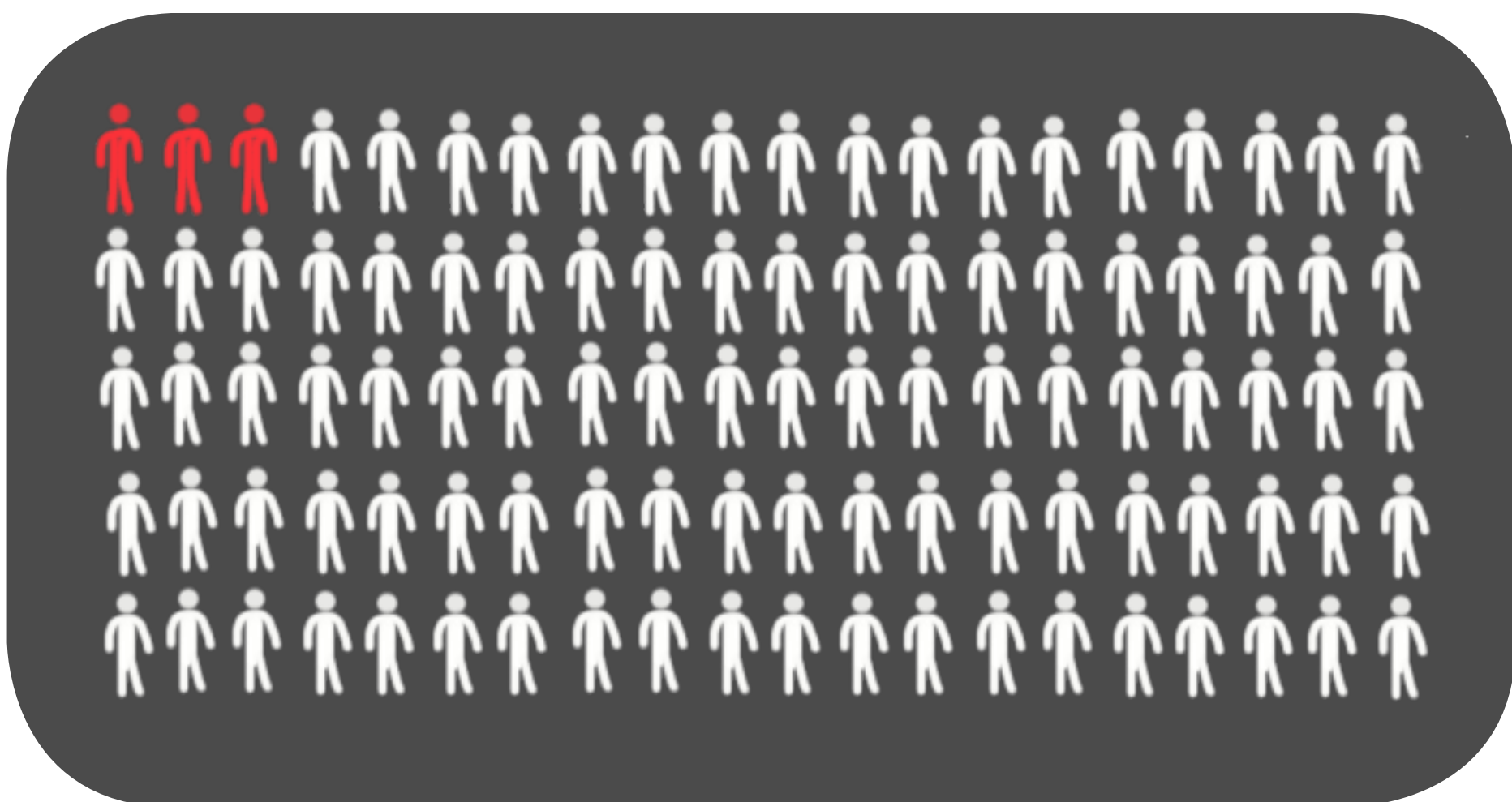
In case scenarios described above, we see how both persons:

- ▶ Had disturbed sleep and appetite;
- ▶ Were not able to perform their routine activities;
- ▶ Had lost touch with reality;
- ▶ Had disturbance in their thoughts;
- ▶ Their day to day functioning and interactions had become severely impaired;
- ▶ Had to be brought to a mental health professional.

What is Psychosis?

“Psychosis” is a condition that affects the mind, where the person loses his or her touch with reality.

- ▶ Studies report that about 3 out of 100 people can develop psychosis in their lifetime.



- ▶ Both males and females can get affected.
- ▶ It usually presents in late teens or early twenties.

What is First Episode of Psychosis (FEP)?

First episode of psychosis is the first time a person experiences a psychotic episode in their lifetime.

During a psychotic episode a person's thoughts and his/her ability to perceive the environment are disturbed.

A first episode of psychosis can be very frightening, confusing and distressing, particularly because it is an unfamiliar experience.



3. Signs & Symptoms of Psychosis

Persons with first episode of psychosis may experience varying symptoms :

► Delusions: They may develop false beliefs which are unshakable even when there is no proof to support them.

These delusions are usually about someone wanting to harm them, following them, talking about them, giving them hidden messages, controlling their actions or having special powers or abilities.

► Hallucinations: They may see or hear things that others don't.

They may consider these experiences to be real and may act according to them. For example, a person may become frightened, suspicious or restless due to them. He or she may isolate themselves or mutter to themselves.



- ▶ **Mood Changes:** They may be unusually excited, irritable, depressed or anxious, or have highly changeable moods.
- ▶ **Disorganized Speech or Behaviour:** They may speak irrelevant things or behave inappropriately.
- ▶ **Incoherent Thoughts:** Their thoughts may speed up, slow down or become jumbled, or they may not connect in a way that makes sense.
- ▶ **Disturbed Sleep and Appetite .**
- ▶ **Decreased Interest:** They may become socially withdrawn and less interactive, may stop doing

their routine activities, and have difficulty functioning overall.

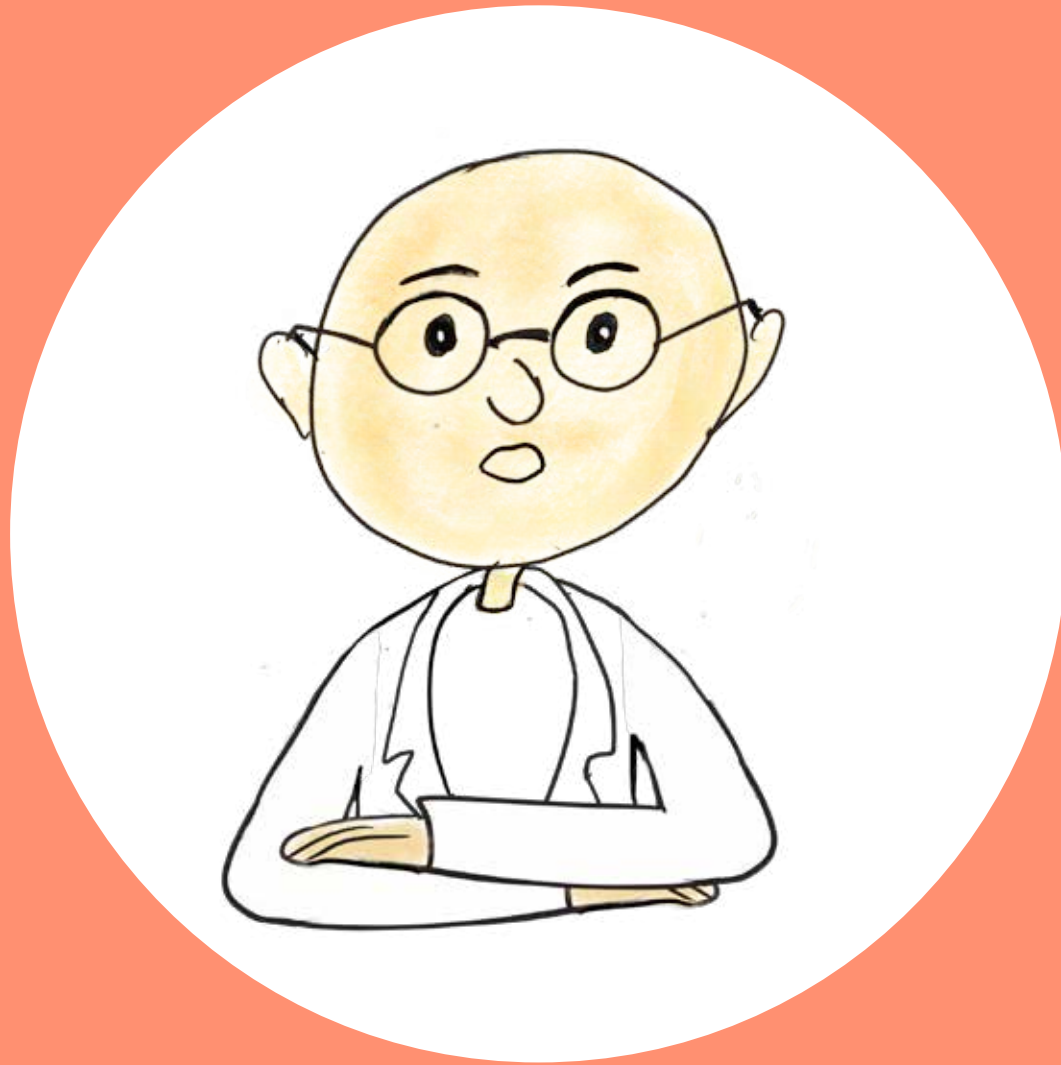
► **Poor Concentration:** They may have difficulties in concentrating and paying attention to tasks at hand. They may have difficulty planning and organizing things.



► **Lack of insight:** People may themselves not be able to recognize these changes in behaviour as being abnormal and may believe there is nothing wrong with them. This is known as “lack of insight”. Due to this people

may refuse to meet the doctor or to take medication.

It is also important to remember that everyone's experience of psychosis is different; hence, the course and outcome will vary from person to person.



These symptoms are very frequently reported by persons experiencing psychosis and their caregivers.

Start adequate treatment as early as possible.

4. Causes of Psychosis

There is no single cause of psychosis. It is a disorder of the mind affected by different biological, social and environmental factors.

Numerous factors interact in complex ways leading to psychosis. These interactions vary between individuals.

1) Psychiatric Illness

Psychosis can occur during the course of different mental health conditions such as Depression, Bipolar disorder, Schizophrenia, Persistent Delusional Disorder or Acute Psychosis.

For an accurate diagnosis and treatment, it is required that you get evaluated by a trained mental health professional.

2) Drugs and Substance Use

Use of substances like alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, amphetamine, PCP, LSD etc. can trigger a psychotic episode.

A psychotic episode can also be triggered if a person suddenly stops taking the substance after using it for a long time.

Certain prescription medications like steroids and some TB medicines can also cause psychotic symptoms. Thus, one should always inform about any medication or substance use when being evaluated by a mental health professional.

3) Physical/ Medical Conditions

Certain metabolic, hormonal or neurological disorders may also cause psychotic symptoms. To rule out these disorders, one requires a detailed evaluation with a health professional.

4) Genetic

Sometimes persons with psychosis may have a family history of psychosis.

Having family history of psychosis makes a person more vulnerable to psychosis but not all people with family history of psychosis develop the illness themselves.

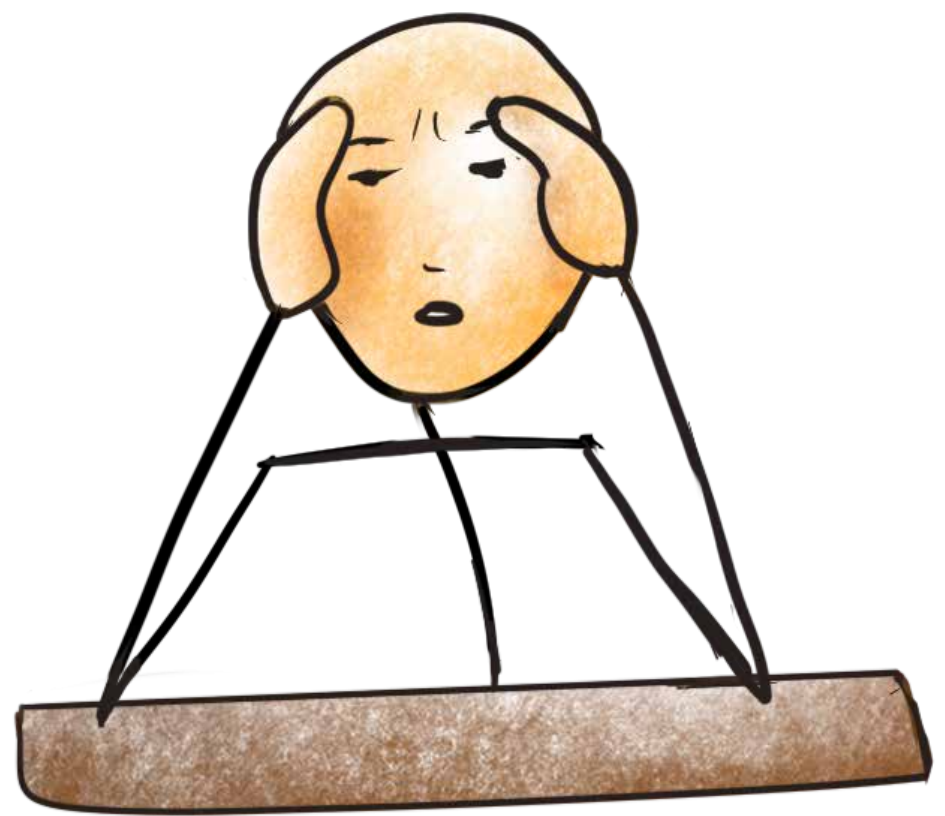
Similarly, it is not necessary that if a person has psychosis their offspring will develop it too.

5) Neurotransmitter Imbalance:

The brain is made up of nerve cells, called neurons, and chemicals, called neurotransmitters. An imbalance of these chemicals in the brain can cause psychosis.

6) Stress

Stress may play a role in triggering an episode of psychosis. In a person who is vulnerable to psychosis, stress can cause the illness to develop.



Stress can be of different types:

- ▶ **Physical stress:** such as irregular sleep, alcohol and drug abuse, poor routine, poor diet, physical sickness, pregnancy or childbirth.
- ▶ **Environmental Stress:** such as inadequate housing, lack of social support,

unemployment, financial issues, academic issues, major life changes (e.g., starting a new school or job).

► **Emotional stress:** such as relationship problems, separation, difficulties with family or friends, death of a close person, accidents, illness, trouble with the law, assault or abuse.

Stress management, avoiding psychoactive substance use and having a regular routine are very important parts of your treatment.

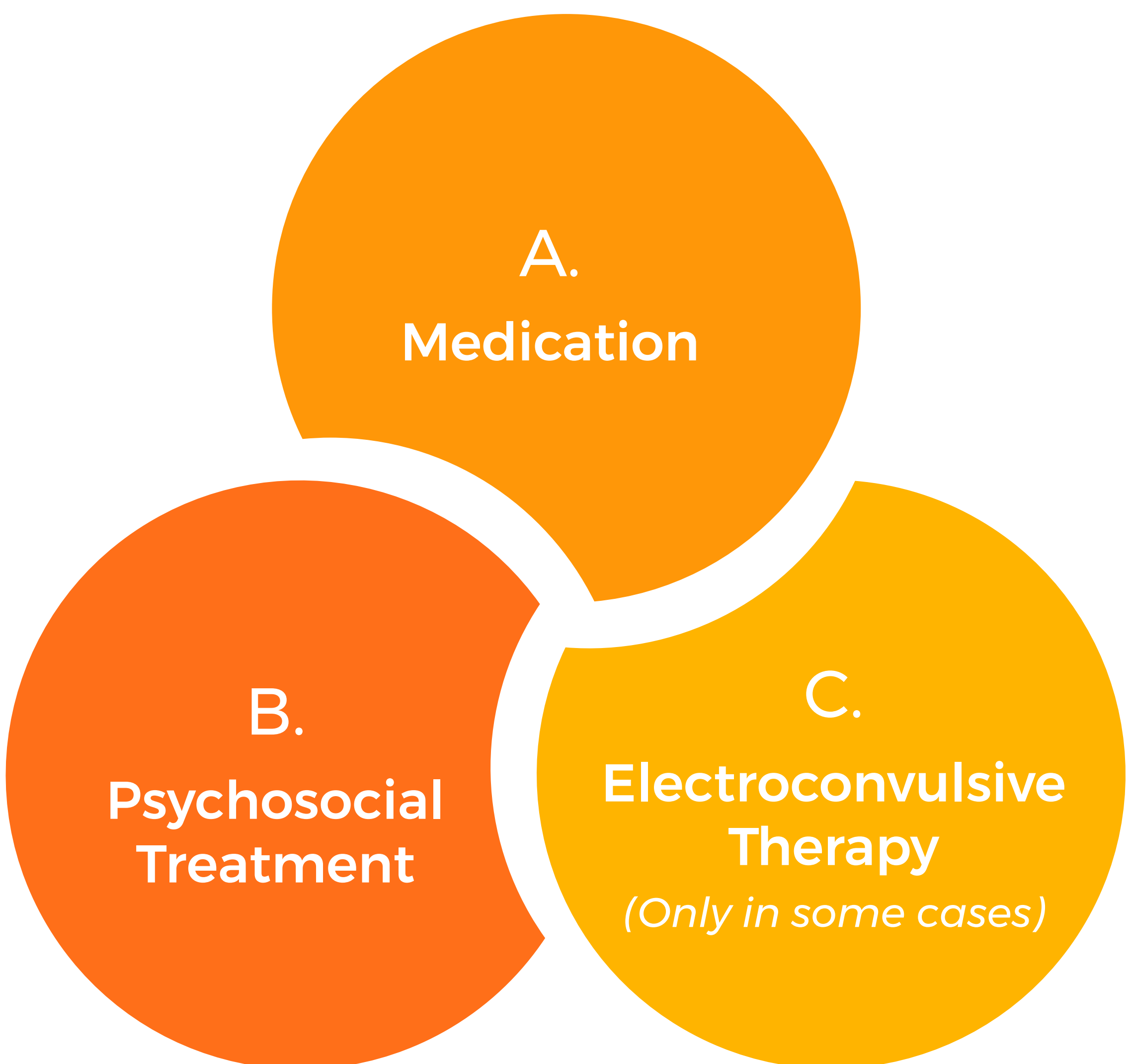


Remember:

- ▶ There is no single cause of psychosis.
- ▶ It is a disorder of the mind.
- ▶ Numerous biological, social and environmental factors may interact in complex ways leading to psychosis.
- ▶ It is important to see a qualified mental health care professional in order to receive a thorough assessment and accurate diagnosis.

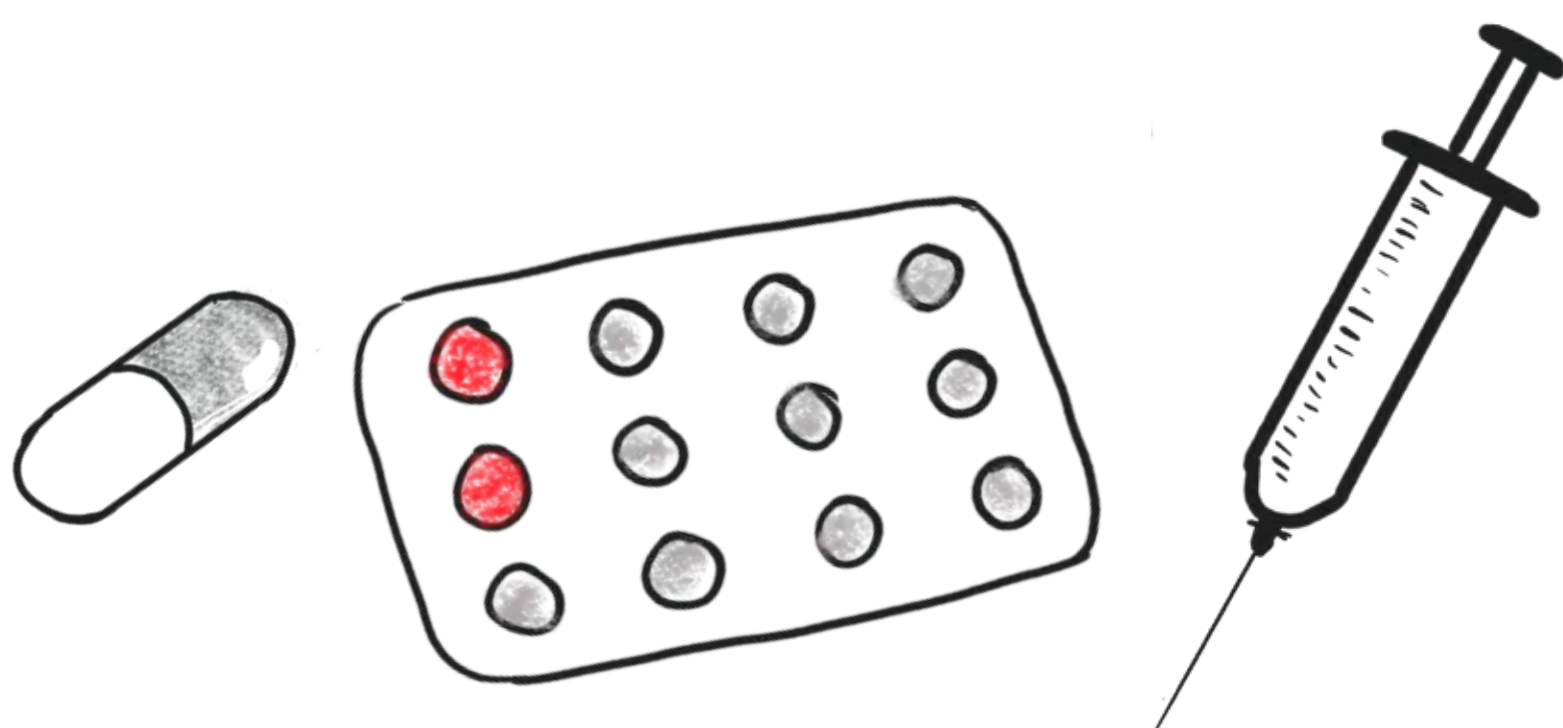
5. Treatment of Psychosis

Treatment of Psychosis has 3
components:



A.ROLE OF MEDICATIONS

- ▶ Antipsychotic medications are used in treatment of psychosis.
- ▶ They are required to deal with the chemical imbalances occurring in the brain.
- ▶ They reduce symptoms of psychosis and improve functioning and quality of life in psychosis.
- ▶ The medications are usually started at low dose and are gradually increased depending on the response.



► Dose requirements vary among people. Inadequate dose may lead to an incomplete response.

► Improvement after starting treatment is gradual. Improvement starts within few days of starting treatment but it may take a few weeks to months for complete effect of the medication to be apparent.



► First symptoms to improve are a person's sleep, appetite and agitation. Subsequently the abnormal thoughts and voices decrease.



- ▶ An antipsychotic drug should be tried for a minimum of 4-6 weeks in adequate dosage before considering it to be ineffective.
- ▶ Some commonly used antipsychotics are risperidone, olanzapine, quetiapine, aripiprazole, amisulpride, haloperidol, and clozapine.
- ▶ Some people may need treatment with other group of medications as well, like antidepressants, mood stabilizers or sedatives depending on their symptoms.

► Individuals should talk with their doctor about the benefits of taking medication as well as their potential side-effects, dosage, and preferences.

► Regular follow-ups are necessary as they provide an opportunity for the doctor to monitor the progress, assess the mental health status of the patient, and also lookout for side effects of medication.

Side-Effects With Medication

- ▶ Like all medications, some side effects may occur with these medications as well.
- ▶ Some people experience no side-effects.
- ▶ Not all medications have same side effects.
- ▶ Most side-effects are not disabling and tend to diminish over time.
- ▶ Common side-effects can be:
 - » Increased sleepiness
 - » Dizziness
 - » Dry mouth

- » Blurry vision
- » Constipation
- » Restlessness
- » Stiffness
- » Tremors
- » Abnormal movements
- » Weight gain
- » High blood sugar
- » Abnormal lipid profile
- » Menstrual changes
- » Abnormal production of breast milk (in both sexes).



- ▶ You may feel like stopping medications due to side effects. It is not advisable as it affects the progress achieved.
- ▶ Abrupt stoppage of medications may lead to increase in or worsening of symptoms.
- ▶ Side-effects are manageable and should be reported to mental health professionals.
- ▶ Can be managed by the adjustment of doses, timing of medication or by adding other medications to reduce side-effects.

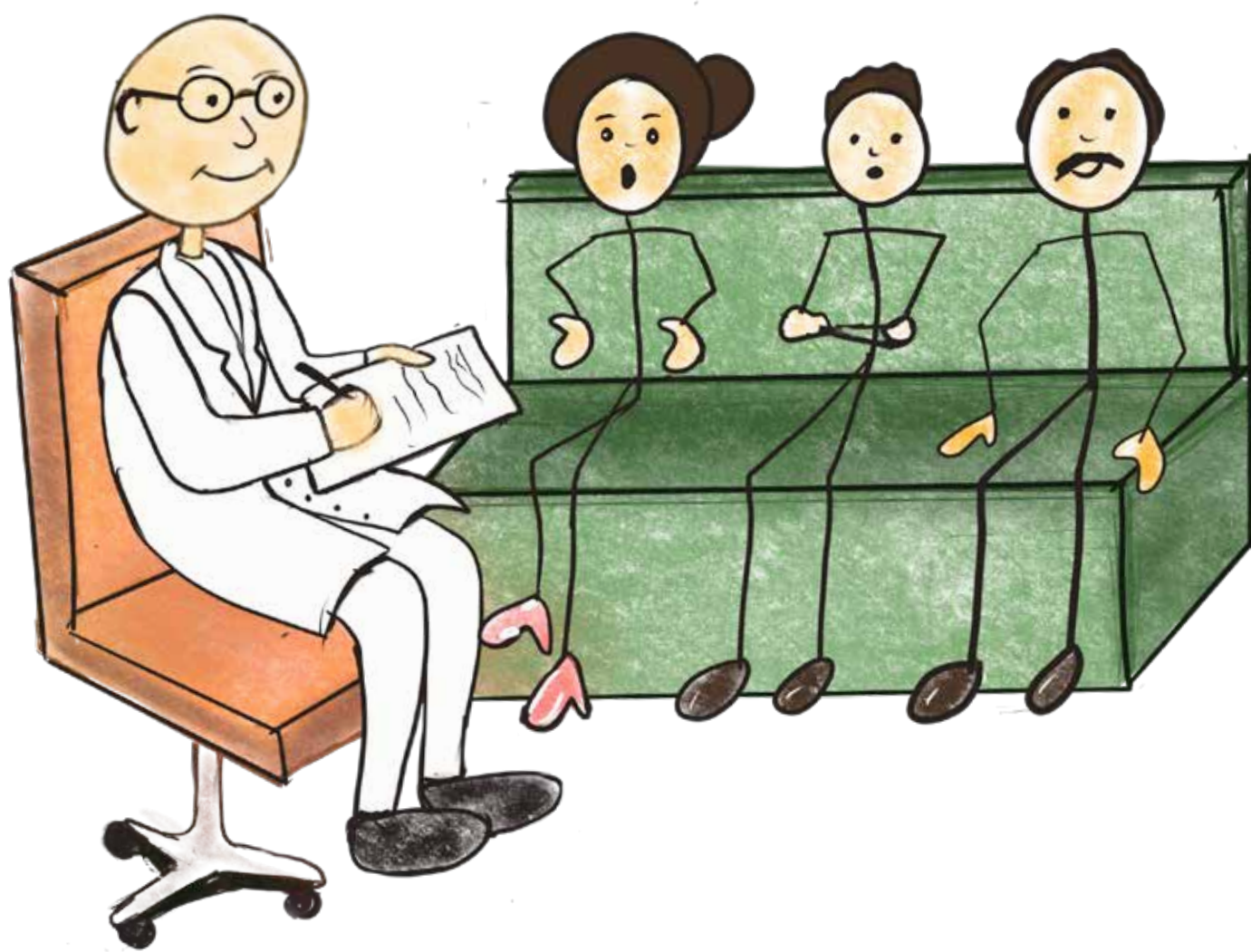
B. PSYCHOSOCIAL TREATMENTS

Along with medications other psychosocial treatments may also be advised depending on the needs of a person.

► **Psychoeducation** is a very effective method of providing information about the various aspects of the illness. This helps the patients and caregivers understand the illness and ways of management. The information provided is based on scientific evidence and is explained in a manner that can be easily understood.

► **Structured Behavioural Lifestyle Interventions** are implemented early in treatment to improve physical health outcomes for people with early psychosis.

► **Family-based Therapy** helps to address the conflicts in families that may arise due to the illness.



► **Social Skills Training** is a psychosocial intervention in which social skills of the person are targeted. It helps the person regain

their previous level of social functioning.

► **Treatment of Substance use:** Substance use can increase or maintain the illness. Various psychological treatments include relapse prevention and motivation enhancement techniques help patients.

► **Behaviour Therapy (BT) and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT):** Experts and trained professionals conduct therapy sessions in a systematic manner. Patients are taught relaxation exercises, ways to cope up with the auditory hallucinations and ways to correct their faulty thoughts.

C. ELECTROCONVULSIVE THERAPY (ECT)

- ▶ ECT is a safe and effective treatment.
- ▶ It is performed under general anaesthesia under supervision in hospital setting.
- ▶ It does not cause any permanent damage.
- ▶ It is useful for patients with serious management difficulties: refusing to eat for many days, very severe symptoms or risk of harm to self or others.

Please Note: *This booklet is intended to provide basic information about mental health treatments. It is not a complete source for all treatments available and should not be used as a guide for making medical decisions.*

6. Recovery in Psychosis

Some of the important concerns of people with First Episode of Psychosis are:

Will I recover?

Will I be able to work again?



Can I ever lead a normal life?

These are important questions.

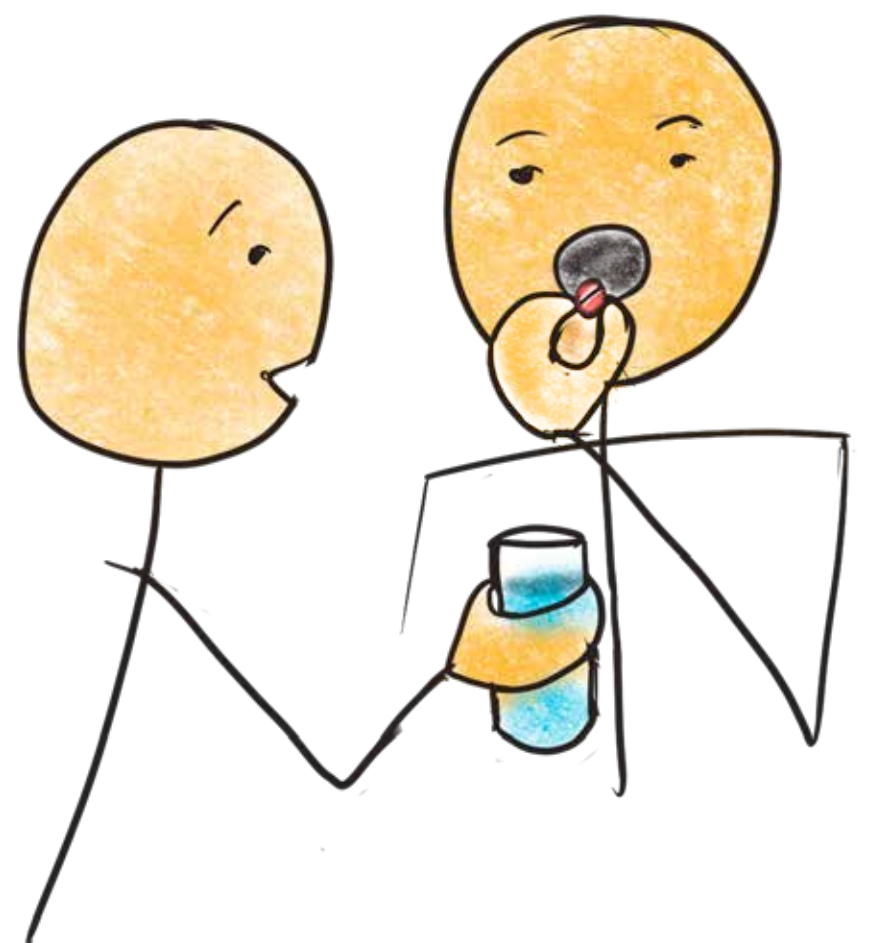
Recovery from first episode of psychosis is an ongoing, active process of developing strengths and positive coping strategies.

You can understand your recovery in 2 broad stages:

Stage 1:

Here the goal of treatment is to reduce active psychotic symptoms.

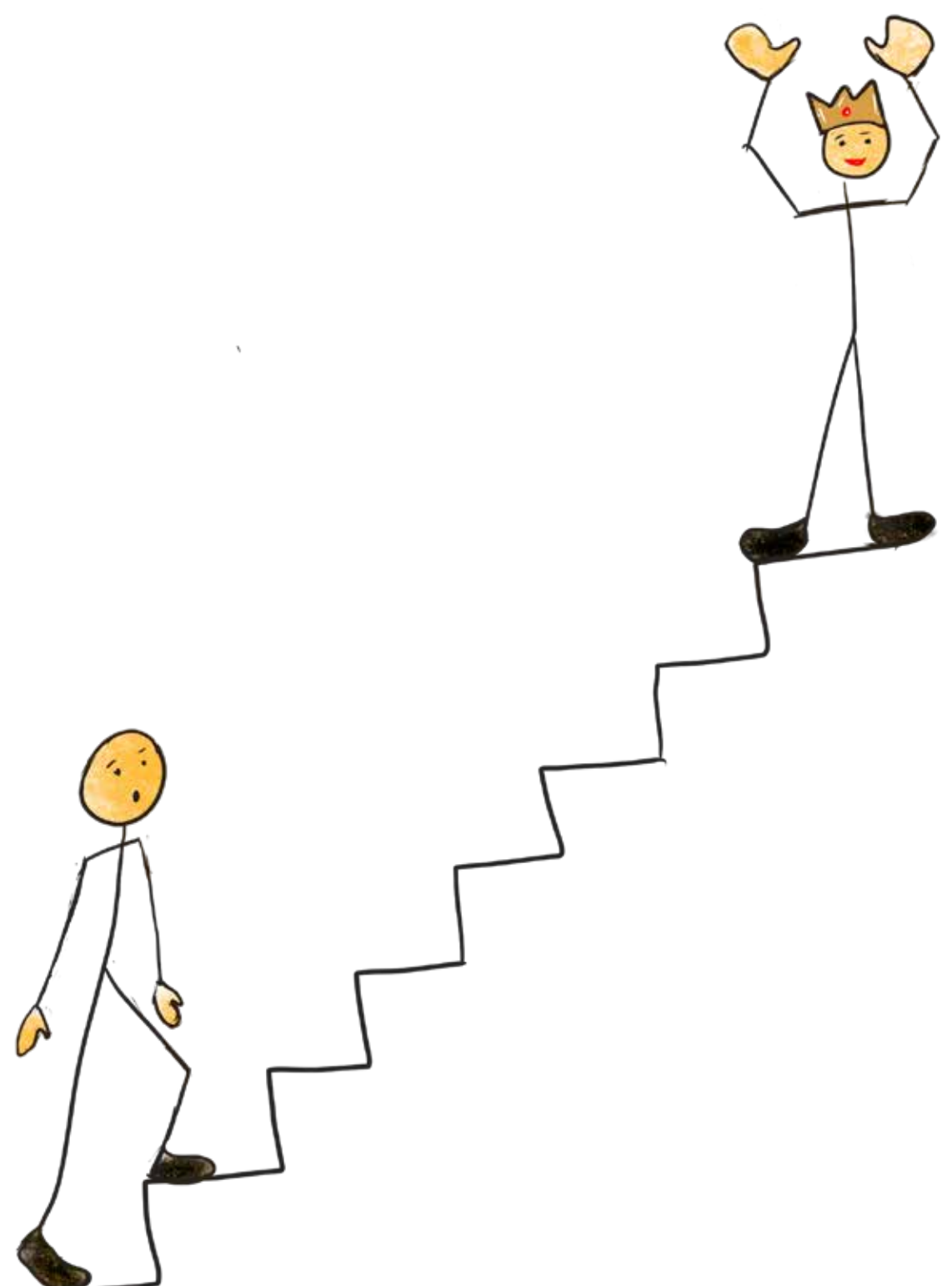
It involves proper medications and supportive care from the caregivers and health professionals. This stage lasts usually from weeks to months.



Stage 2:

This stage involves:

- ▶ Making sense of what had happened to you.
- ▶ Gaining knowledge about your illness.
- ▶ Improving your self-efficacy in handling the illness.
- ▶ Reorienting yourself towards your life goals.
- ▶ Recovering your social roles and relationships that give your life value and meaning.



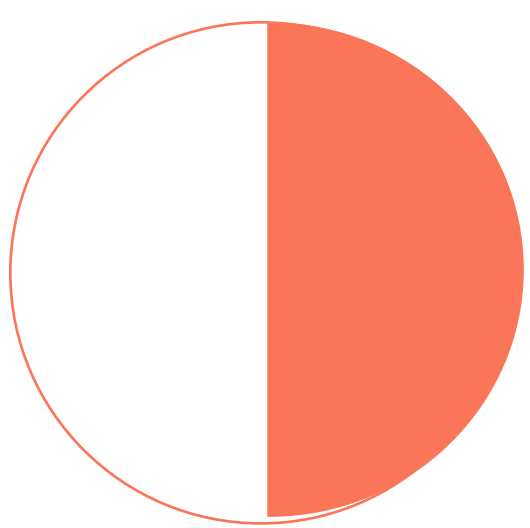
- ▶ Empowering yourself so that you can continue having a meaningful and satisfying life with dignity and autonomy.

Psychosis is treatable and early treatment increases the chances of a successful recovery.

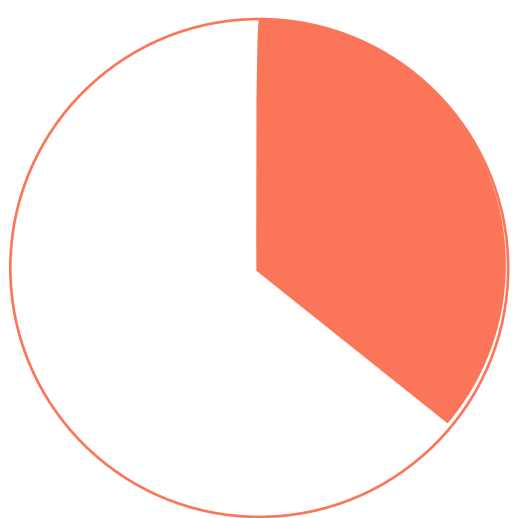
- ▶ The course of recovery from a first episode of psychosis varies from person to person.
- ▶ Persons who receive early and adequate treatment, may never have another psychotic episode. Their symptoms go away quickly and they are able to resume their routine life pretty early.

► In some persons, it may take several months to recover, and they may need support over a longer period of time.

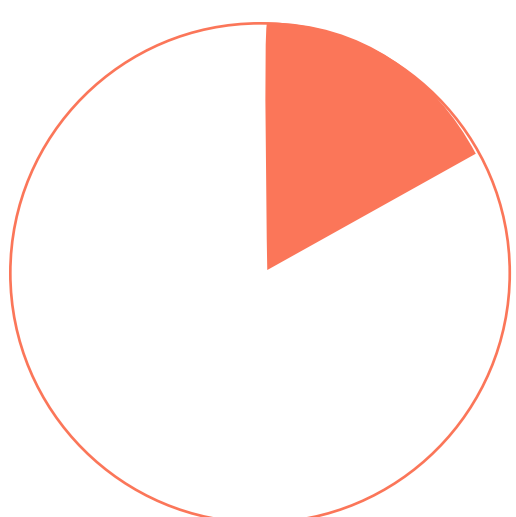
► Research has shown that among persons who experience a first episode of psychosis:



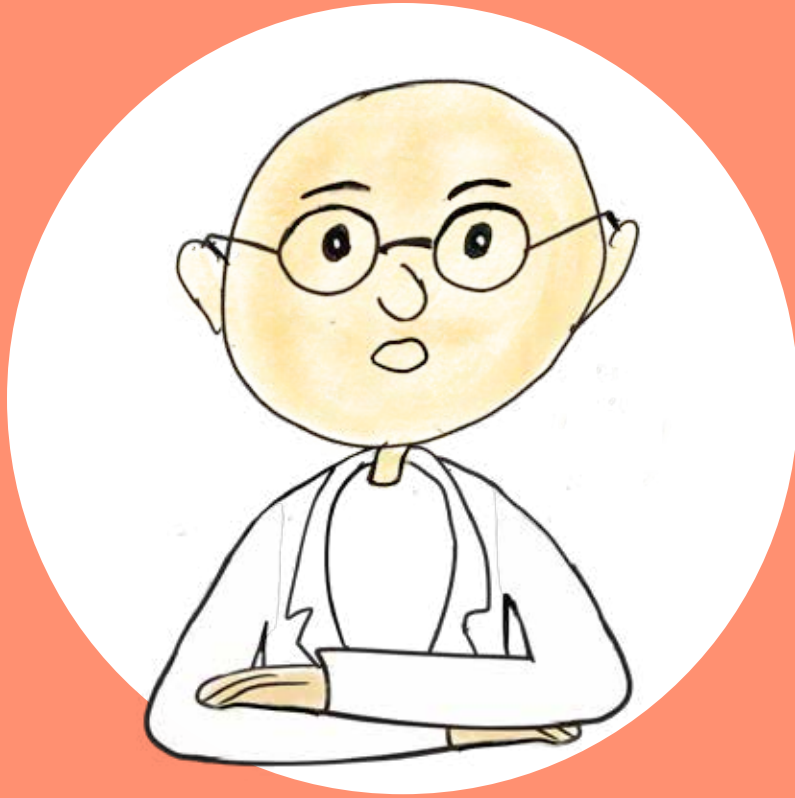
50- 60 % have good functional recovery at one year.



30 - 40% have remissions and exacerbations during the course.



20% may have unremitting symptoms.



**So recovery is not just about
‘getting rid’ of the problems
and symptoms.**

**It is about seeing beyond
your problems and focusing
instead on your abilities,
possibilities, interests and
future.**



- ▶ The course of recovery from a first episode of psychosis varies from person to person.
- ▶ Recovery means the ability to live a fulfilling and productive life.
- ▶ It is important for you to be involved in your treatment planning and recovery.
- ▶ Your needs and goals should drive your individual treatment program.

7. Common Myths & Misconceptions

MYTH: Psychosis is the result of black magic or supernatural forces.

FACT: It is a biological disease which results from interplay of multiple factors like genetic and environmental factors as in many physical diseases, such as heart diseases and diabetes..

MYTH: Psychosis is a rare condition.

TRUTH: The lifetime risk of developing psychosis is around 3 in 100.



MYTH: There is no treatment for this disorder.

FACT: Wide range of treatment options are available with which people with psychosis can function better.



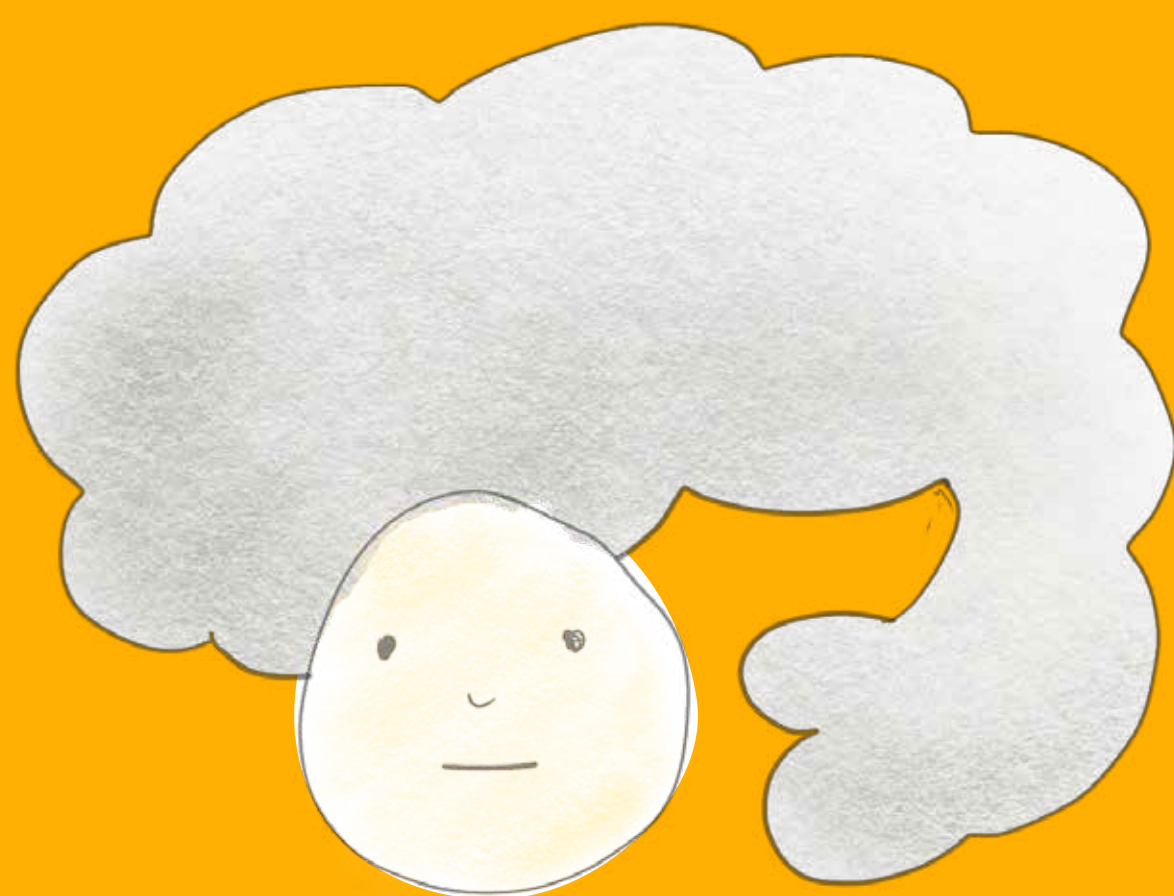
MYTH: Patients of psychosis get addicted to their medicines.

FACT: Medicines prescribed for psychosis are not addictive. If taken properly as prescribed by your doctor, they help to treat the chemical problems in the brain resulting in psychosis. They do not make a person an addict and do not lead to drug-seeking behaviour.



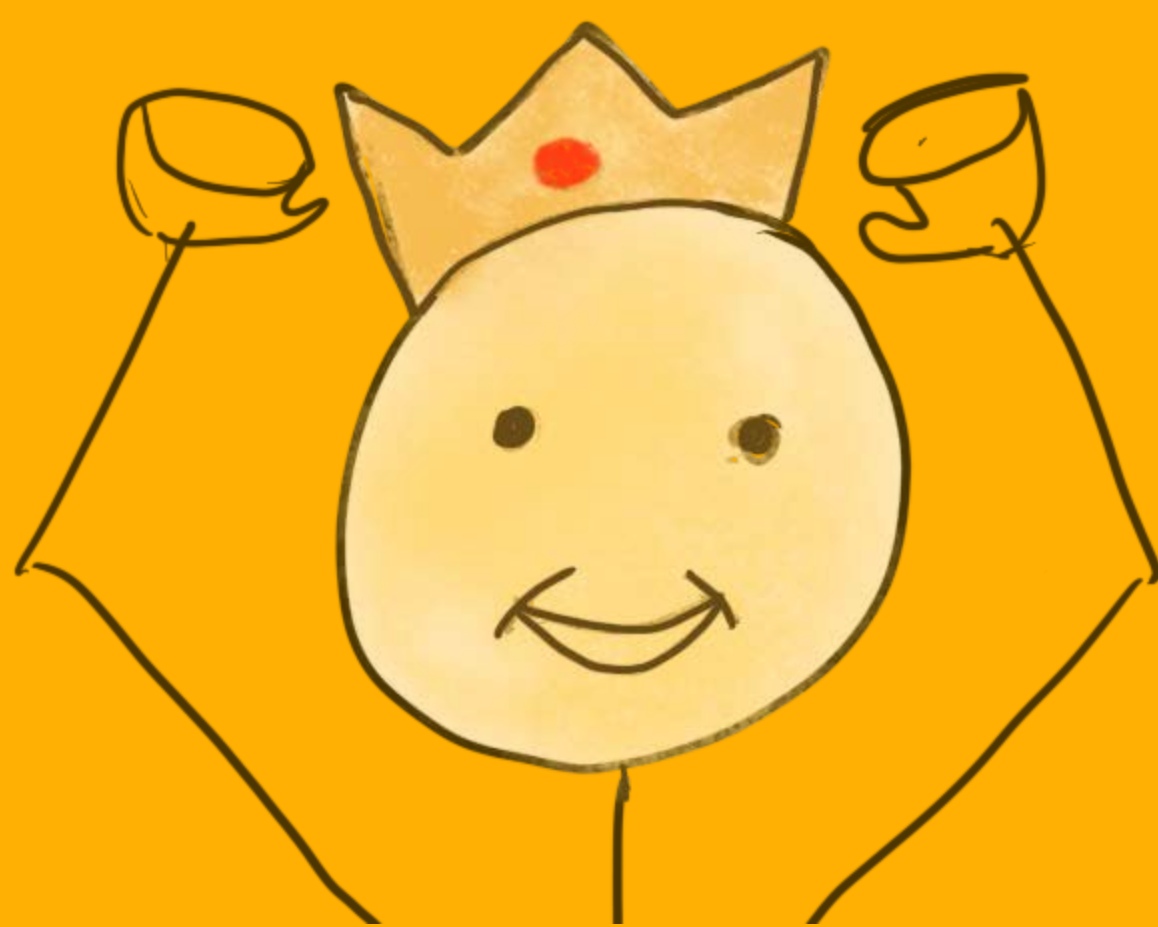
MYTH: These medications are simply sedating pills and they control the patient's mind.

FACT: The medications help in reducing hallucinations, agitation, confusion, and delusions. Sedation may occur as a side-effect.



MYTH: Patients of psychosis cannot lead a healthy and fruitful life

FACT: Treatment can help decrease symptoms and improve functioning of patients with psychosis.



MYTH: People with psychosis are dangerous and violent.

FACT: People with psychosis are neither dangerous nor violent. They might be frightened, confused or agitated when they are experiencing severe symptoms.



MYTH: Marriage cures mental illness.

FACT: Marriage does not cure mental illness. Illness gets better with proper medication and therapy.