

#1: What is Psychosis?

What is psychosis?

The word *psychosis* is used to describe conditions, which affect the mind and involve some loss of contact with reality. When someone has these experiences it is called a "psychotic episode." Psychosis is most likely to occur in young adults and is quite common. Around *3 out of every 100 people* experience a psychotic episode, making psychosis more common than diabetes. Psychosis can happen to anyone. Like other illnesses it can be treated.

3 out of every 100 young people will experience a psychotic episode

Question: What did you know about psychosis before your experience?

What are the symptoms of psychosis?

Psychosis can lead to changes in perception and thinking and to unusual ideas. To understand the experience of psychosis it is useful to group together some of the more characteristic symptoms.

Symptoms of Psychosis

Symptom	Description	Example
Hallucinations	Hearing, seeing, feeling, or smelling something that is not there.	Hearing voices which no one else can hear, or seeing things, which aren't there.
Delusions (false beliefs) or ideas of reference	Having a strong belief that is firmly held in spite of contrary evidence or believing that something or someone is referring to you.	Being convinced from the way cars are parked outside your house that you are being watched by the police; believing that a television show is about your life.

Confused Thinking and Other Cognitive Difficulties	<p>Difficulty with thinking clearly and expressing oneself clearly.</p> <p>Problems with concentration, memory, and reasoning.</p>	Your speech seems unclear or doesn't make sense to others; your thoughts seem to speed up or slow down; you have difficulty concentrating on tasks such as homework and remembering things.
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These symptoms can occur for lots of different reasons including:

- Hallucinations can occur when people are deprived of sleep, following the death of a close friend or relative, or as the result of using certain drugs such as LSD.
- False beliefs can occur when people are frightened and alone in an unsafe or unfamiliar environment, or when they use drugs.
- Cognitive difficulties can occur when people have sleeping problems, feel very anxious or depressed, or are under a great deal of stress.

People who experience symptoms of psychosis often report additional experiences or symptoms. These symptoms include difficulties relating to other people, problems at school or work, and a lack of motivation or energy to do things. These experiences may continue after the symptoms of psychosis have improved. The chart below provides information on some of the symptoms that other people with psychosis have reported.

Symptoms Sometimes Associated with Psychosis

Symptom	Description	Example
Decline in Social Functioning	Less time socializing, problems at school or work.	Difficulty making friends or spending time with friends or family; spending a lot of time alone in your room.
Disorganized Behavior	Unpredictable movements or remaining motionless.	Frequently distracted, leading to difficulty completing everyday tasks.

Negative Symptoms	Lack of energy, motivation, pleasure, or emotional expressiveness.	Things that you used to enjoy don't bring the same pleasure; difficulty "getting going" or following through with things; people say that they can't read your facial expression.
Depression	Feeling extremely sad or blue that can affect appetite, sleep, or energy level.	Loss of interest in activities you used to enjoy or feeling sad; sleeping too much; feeling tired and having low energy; not eating enough or eating too much.
Suicidal thoughts	Thoughts that you want to harm yourself.	Feeling that you want to hurt yourself because you think have no hope for your situation or no way out.
Anxiety	Being nervous; feeling scared, worried or afraid.	Avoiding a situation or experience because of fear; constant worry or concern; difficulty concentrating; physical symptoms such as heart palpitations, perspiration, trembling, or shortness of breath.

Questions:

Have you experienced any of these symptoms? If so, which ones?

What was the experience like for you?