

Recovery

The majority of those with mental ill-health can recover or at the very least, learn to manage their symptoms.

Those in recovery regain their positive mental health and can live a fulfilling life.

The earlier someone seeks help, the quicker and more successful their chances of recovery are.

Recovery can be aided by a number of things:

- Complementary therapy
- Medication
- Healthy diet
- Mentoring and befriending
- Exercise
- Good relationships

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Early Intervention is Prevention

The earlier we can spot the signs and symptoms in someone with poor mental health, the better.

Untreated depression/anxiety can lead to thoughts of suicide and/or self harm.

We need to spot the signs as first aiders and encourage the person to attend their GP and link into the Niamh Louise Foundation.

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What is Mental Health?

The World Health Organisation defines mental health as

'a state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community'.

What is Mental Ill-Health?

Mental ill-health covers a wide range of mental health problems over a continuum. These can range from those with mild symptoms to those with severe mental health disorders. These can vary in intensity and duration.

What is a Mental Health Disorder?

This is a diagnosable illness which comprises a broad range of symptoms, including major changes in an individual's thinking, emotional state and behaviour, and disrupts their ability to work and maintain relationships.

What is a Mental Health Problem?

This describes symptoms of mental ill-health which are not severe enough to need any diagnosis. These symptoms can disrupt the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of individuals and, if not dealt with appropriately, they can lead to a mental health disorder.

Mental health problems can be more disabling than many chronic physical illnesses.

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What is Depression?

Depression is more than simply feeling unhappy or fed up for a few days.

We all go through spells of feeling down when bad things happen, but when you're depressed you feel persistently sad for weeks or months, rather than just a few days, and sometimes you don't know why.

This is known as 'clinical depression' and can affect a person's ability to maintain relationships, to work, or to carry out daily activities.

Symptoms of Depression

At least 2 of these symptoms for at least 2 weeks;

- Unusually sad mood that is persistent
- Loss of enjoyment/interest/motivation in things you used to enjoy
- Tiredness
- Loss of confidence
- Agitation
- Sleeping too much
- Feeling tearful
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Lack of energy
- Difficulty concentrating
- Trouble sleeping
- Change in eating pattern
- Lack of enjoyment in life
- Experiencing thoughts of self harm/suicide

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What are Anxiety Disorders?

Everyone experiences anxiety at some time in their life, such as when you are worried about an exam or a job interview. Anxiety can often be a good thing, keeping us safe from danger or helping motivate us to solve tasks or tackle problems.

However, some people experience feelings of anxiety for no reason. Their feelings are severe, long lasting, and can interfere with their everyday lives. They worry excessively about things and find it very difficult to control.

Anxiety disorders can affect people physically, psychologically, and how they behave. It can often prevent people from functioning in their everyday routine and sometimes can interfere with work and personal relationships.

Symptoms to look out for include:

- Dizziness
- Pins and needles and numbness
- Palpitations
- Muscle aches and pains
- Dry mouth
- Redness of the face
- Unrealistic/excessive fear and worry
- Irritability
- Distress in social situations
- Headache
- Tiredness
- Excessive sweating
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea
- Mind racing
- Decreased concentration
- Anger

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What is Psychosis?

Psychosis is used to describe symptoms of mental health disorders (such as bipolar or schizophrenia) that stop the person from thinking clearly, and telling the difference between reality and their imagination.

There will be major disturbances in their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours.

The individual will often not know that they are behaving anyway unusually.

The person can often experience hallucinations and delusions i.e. false perceptions and false beliefs. They may often hear voices which can distract them and which they may talk back to.

Symptoms of Psychosis

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Suspiciousness
- Blunted/flat or inappropriate emotion
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling that they or people around them have changed in some way
- Sleep disturbance
- Withdrawal from social situations

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What is Suicide?

Suicide Can Strike Anyone.

While there is not one specific reason for anyone to contemplate suicide, there are many social, economic, and environmental triggers which can contribute to the onset of these thoughts.

Myths and Facts

Myth: Talking about suicide encourages it or puts the idea in someone's head.

Fact: Raising the issue of suicide with those who are depressed or distressed by actually asking the question, 'Are you thinking of suicide?' may open the door to therapeutic intervention.

Myth: People who are suicidal want to die.

Fact: Most people who are suicidal don't want to die, they just want to end their pain.

Myth: Only the clinically depressed make suicide attempts.

Fact: People who suffer from other forms of psychiatric illness or emotional distress are also at risk of suicide.

Warning Signs

- **Expressing suicidal thoughts**
- **Isolation/Withdrawal**
- **Sudden changes in mood/behaviour**
- **Making final arrangements**
- **Lack of self care/Over self care which is unusual**

How to Respond

- **Listen**
- **Don't judge**
- **Ask the question, 'Are you thinking of suicide?'**
- **Encourage the person to seek support from their GP or the Niamh Louise Foundation**

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