



Psychosis

What is psychosis?

Psychosis is a way to describe a variety of mental illnesses and happens when a person loses some contact with reality. Unfortunately psychosis will cause severe instability in thinking, emotions and behaviour. Also psychosis will severely disrupt a way a person lives their life including relationships, work and even looking after themselves. Psychosis is also not as common as anxiety disorders and depression. The main psychotic illnesses are schizophrenia, and drug induced psychosis.

We must understand that psychotic illnesses are not the most common mental health problems; however during substance use psychosis can become more common. Unfortunately some people in early stages of psychosis can often go undiagnosed for some period of time.

What are some signs of this illness developing?

There are often changes in how people may think or see things for example:

- They may have strange and odd ideas
- May find it very difficult to concentrate
- May have a short attention span, and may get irritated easily
- May believe that others are acting differently or have changed not them

There are also chances of changes in emotion and enthusiasm, for example:

- Change in appetite
- Depression
- Anxiety
- They could become very suspicious and irritable
- Could have reduced energy and motivation

We must remember that the spiritual experiences of some Aboriginal people may include seeing and hearing things that others can not, and this can include communicating with spirits and animal tokens. These experiences are different to those in psychotic illnesses. Sometimes however these experiences are not spiritual but are symptoms of a mental illness.

What causes psychosis?

There is no evidence that there is one single cause for psychosis therefore it is said that psychosis may be caused by a combination of factors including stress, genetics and other unknown factors. These other factors which could make small contributions can include head injury, and complications around birth. It seems that some people are more vulnerable to developing psychosis than others.

In people who are vulnerable to experiencing psychosis, an episode can be triggered by factors such as drug use or withdrawal from substances. Using or withdrawing from drugs such as cannabis, LSD, cocaine, amphetamines, ecstasy and alcohol can all potentially trigger or indeed cause a psychotic episode.

Where can I go for help?

Sometimes we face events in our lives that we are unable to handle ourselves or with help of family and friends and sometimes there are situations in our lives that might be too much for us to cope with. In these cases, there are options out there for you to take.

Some of these options can include:

- Counselling (Someone to yarn too)
- Behavioural and Lifestyle changes (Health Choices)
- See a doctor who might give you medication that can help

If you just want to have a yarn or if you would like to find out more information contact any of your local Community Mental Health or other services listed below.

The Aboriginal Social & Emotional Wellbeing Fact Sheet Series was designed by the Aboriginal Social & Emotional Wellbeing workers David Freeman & Brenda Freeman based at Campbelltown Community Mental Health Service
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