

- substance abuse

In older children and pre-adolescents:

- substance abuse
- inability to cope with problems and daily activities
- change in sleeping and/or eating habits
- excessive complaints of physical ailments
- frequent outbursts of anger
- defiance of authority, truancy, theft and/or vandalism
- intense fear of weight gain
- prolonged negative mood, often accompanied by poor appetite or thoughts of death

In younger children:

- changes in school performance
- poor grades despite strong efforts
- excessive worry or anxiety (i.e., refusing to go to bed or school)
- hyperactivity
- persistent nightmares
- persistent disobedience or aggression
- frequent temper tantrums

For More Information

For more information or referrals to local services, visit our online Frequently Asked Questions section at www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/faqs, contact Mental Health America, or contact your local Mental Health America affiliate.

Other Resources

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
24-hour crisis line
800-273-TALK (8255)

SAMHSA Health Information Network (SHIN)
877-726-4727
www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/databases
www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov

American Psychiatric Association
888-357-7924
www.healthyminds.org

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
www.aacap.org

American Psychological Association
800-964-2000
www.apahelpcenter.org

National Association of Social Workers
www.helpstartshere.org/common/Search/default.asp

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
800-826-3632
www.dbsalliance.org

Other Brochures

For pamphlets on a variety of mental health topics, call 800-969-6642, visit www.mentalhealthamerica.net or e-mail publicationsales@mentalhealthamerica.net.

Donations

Make a tax-deductible contribution to Mental Health America online at www.mentalhealthamerica.net or call us at 703-833-7533. CFC #10564.

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Anxiety Disorders Association of America
240-485-1001
www.adaa.org

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
800-233-4050
www.chadd.org;
www.help4adhd.org

Sidran Institute
888-825-8249
www.sidran.org
Treatment referrals for posttraumatic stress disorder and self injury

National Eating Disorders Association
800-931-2237
www.nationaleatingdisorders.org

Treatment and Research Advancements National Association for Personality Disorder (TARA)
888-4-TARA-APD
www.tara4bpd.org

Child and Adolescent Bipolar Foundation
847-256-8525
www.bpkids.org

About Mental Health America

Mental Health America (formerly the National Mental Health Association) is the country's leading nonprofit dedicated to helping ALL people live mentally healthier lives. With our more than 320 affiliates nationwide, we represent a growing movement of Americans who promote mental wellness for the health and well-being of the nation—every day and in times of crisis.

Compliments of...

MHIA
Mental Health America



Mental Illness in the Family: Part 1

Recognizing the Warning Signs and Learning How to Cope

MHIA
Mental Health America
2000 N. Beauregard Street, 6th Floor
Alexandria, VA 22311
Toll-free: 800-969-6642
www.mentalhealthamerica.net



Most people believe that mental disorders are rare and "happen to someone else." In fact, mental disorders are common and widespread. An estimated one in five Americans suffer from some form of mental health condition in a given year.

Unfortunately, most families are not prepared to cope with learning their loved one has a mental illness.

It can be physically and emotionally trying, and can make us feel vulnerable to the opinions and judgments of others.

If you think you or someone you know may have a mental health or emotional problem, it is important to remember there is help—and hope.

What Is Mental Illness?

A mental illness is a disease that causes mild to severe disturbances in thought and/or behavior, resulting in an inability to cope with life's ordinary demands and routines.

Some of the more common disorders are depression, bipolar disorder, dementia, schizophrenia and anxiety disorders. Symptoms may include changes in mood, personality, personal habits, and/or social withdrawal.

Mental health problems may be related to excessive stress due to a particular situation or series of events. As with cancer, diabetes and heart disease, mental illnesses are often physical as well as emotional and psychological. Mental illnesses may be caused by a reaction to environmental stresses, genetic factors, biochemical imbalances or a combination of these. With proper care and treatment, many individuals learn to cope with or recover from a mental illness or emotional disorder.

How to Cope Day to Day

Accepting your feelings

Despite the different symptoms and types of mental illnesses, many families that have a loved one with a mental health problem share similar experiences. You may find yourself denying the warning signs, worrying what other people will think because of stigma, or wondering what caused your loved one to become ill. Accept that these feelings are normal and common

among families going through similar situations. Find out all you can about your loved one's illness by reading and talking with mental health professionals. Share what you have learned with other family and friends.

Handling unusual behavior

The outward signs of a mental illness are often behavioral. An individual may be extremely quiet or withdrawn. Conversely, he or she may burst into tears or have outbursts of anger. Even after treatment has started, individuals with a mental illness can exhibit anti-social behaviors.

When in public, these behaviors can be disruptive and difficult to accept. The next time you and your family member visit your doctor or mental health professional, discuss these behaviors and develop a strategy for coping.

Establishing a support network

Whenever possible, seek support from friends and family members. If you feel you cannot discuss your situation with friends or other family members, find a self-help or support group online or in person. These groups provide an opportunity for you to talk to other people who are experiencing the same types of problems. They can listen and offer valuable advice.

Seeking counseling

Therapy can be beneficial for both the individual with a mental illness and other family members. A mental health professional can suggest ways to cope with and better understand your loved one's illness.

When looking for a therapist, be patient and talk to a few professionals so you can choose the person who is right for you and your family. It may take time until you are comfortable, but in the long run you will be glad you

sought help.

Taking time out

It is common for the person with the mental illness to become the focus of family life. When this happens, other members of the family may feel ignored or resentful. Some may find it difficult to pursue their own interests.

If you are the caregiver, you need some time for yourself. Schedule time away to prevent becoming frustrated or angry. If you schedule time for yourself, it will help you to keep things in perspective, and you may have more patience and compassion for coping or helping your loved one. Only when you are physically and emotionally healthy can you help others.

It is important to remember that there is hope for recovery, and that with treatment many people with a mental illness return to a productive and fulfilling life.

Warning Signs and Symptoms:

To learn more about symptoms of mental illnesses, refer to the Mental Health America brochure on that illness. The following are signs that your loved one may need to speak to a medical or mental health professional.

In adults:

- confused thinking
- prolonged depression (sadness or irritability)
- feelings of extreme highs and lows
- excessive fears, worries and anxieties
- social withdrawal
- denial of obvious problems
- dramatic changes in eating or sleeping habits
- strong feelings of anger
- delusions or hallucinations
- growing inability to cope with daily problems and activities
- suicidal thoughts
- numerous unexplained physical ailments

Mental illnesses are real,
recognizable and treatable.

There is hope. Help is available.

