

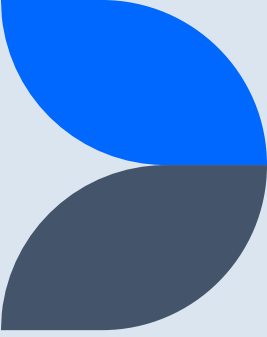


# **Mental Illness 101**

**DMHAS Statewide Services**

**Nursing Home Diversion and Transition  
Program**

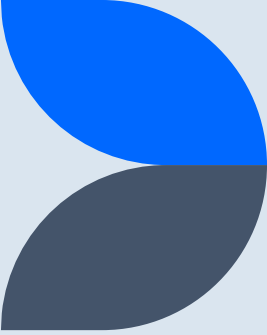
# What is Mental Illness?



## An Alteration in:

- **Thought** (How people Perceive the world around them)
- **Emotion** (Mood)
- **Behavior**
- Mental illness influences thoughts, mood and behavioral choices and can result in serious functional impairment in one or more life activities such as social or occupational
- The symptoms of mental illness are most often seen in how people act, behave and how they talk speech

# Thought Disorders



## Disturbance of Thought

- Confusion between thoughts and reality
- Usually requires medication
- Examples:
  - Schizophrenia
  - Paranoia
  - Other psychosis

# Characteristics of a Thought Disorder

- Hallucinations- experiences in the five senses that are not real but are experienced as real
- Auditory Hallucinations: hearing voices are the most common in people with schizophrenia
- Delusions- Affect how people perceive the world around them
- Irritability/confusion
- Fixed beliefs that can interfere with functioning

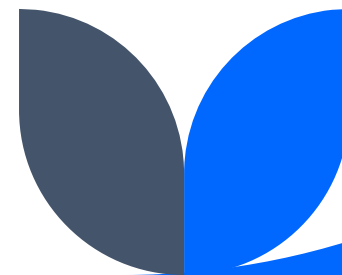
(Ex: A person believes they are the president of the United States, A person does not want to leave their house because they believe that everyone they encounter is talking or laughing about them)



# How Mental Illness Affects Thinking

Illogical- doesn't  
make sense or is  
psychotic

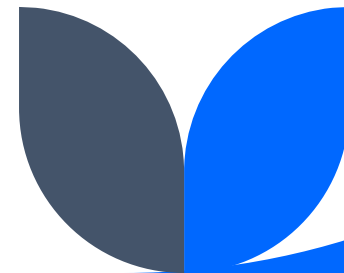
Distorted- Delusions  
are distorted, false,  
fixed  
ideas....thoughts the  
person believes



# Emotional (Mood) Disorders

**Mood Disorders are the most common type of disorder**

- **Extreme emotions of sadness (depression) and euphoria (mania) either alone or together**
- **Emotions interfere with daily functioning and life**
- **Can increase risk of suicide**
- **Examples of Mood Disorders- Depression, Bipolar disorder**



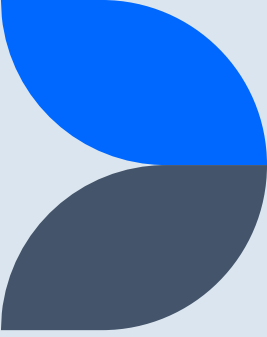
# Characteristics of Emotional Disorders

## ❖ Depression

- Sadness and lack of pleasure in the majority of ADL's
- People who are depressed- loss of interest in things that previously interested them
- Lasting feelings of hopelessness/or helplessness
- Increased anxiety
- Fatigue, low energy
- Preoccupation with death/suicidality
- May be evident by no longer caring about their appearance
- Appearing dishelved and unkempt
- Sleep disturbance
- Decreased appetite
- Difficulty concentrating
- Memory impairment
- Irritability
- Isolation/withdrawal

# Bipolar Disorder

- Mood swings of highs and lows, extreme feelings of elation then sadness
- Disruption in judgement/behavior
- Racing thoughts
- Decreased need for sleep
- Pressured speech (speaking really fast, incomplete sentences, mouth can't keep up with brain)
- Inflated self-esteem
- Distractibility





# Anxiety Disorders



Anxiety is both a symptom and a disorder



Anxiety often occurs with depression



Anxiety is a common symptom with vision and hearing loss



Anxiety is characterized by an increased fear or nervousness, a feeling of little or no control.



Familiar actions like driving or leaving the house become unfamiliar, scary, and unsafe

# Anxious Behaviors May Include:

- Heightened awareness(“on alert”), constant need for reassurance or soothing
- Pressured speech
- Pacing
- Quick, short breaths

## **OCD Behavior Includes:**

- Uncontrollable need to perform repeated rituals, i.e. Hand washing, light switches turned off/on

## **PTSD Behavior may include:**

- Unpredictable acting out or “zoning out” when triggered by an event

# Treatment Examples for Anxiety:

Talk therapy

Relaxation  
techniques

Medications

Mindful  
breathing

Hypnotherapy

meditation

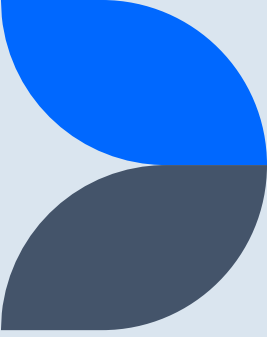
# Behavior

- What you think, how you perceive the world, and how you feel effects how you behave

## **Common behaviors include:**

- Impulsive responses
- Pacing
- Loud voices, swearing
- Threatening statements
- Defensive posturing/stance

# Personality Disorders



Can be co-occurring with other medical conditions or mental health issues

**Some Types of Personality Disorders include:**

- Obsessive compulsive personality- behaviors include repeated patterns and rituals
- Borderline personality- often related to childhood trauma

**Behaviors Include:**

- Splitting of staff (trying to play staff against each other)
- Good staff/ bad staff
- Can be dramatic, unpredictable and manipulative

# Common Characteristics of Individuals with Mental Illness

- Experience a decreased ability to problem solve
- They can easily become overwhelmed when faced with a challenging task
- Are oftentimes rigid and inflexible in their thinking
- Can become upset when they're irrational beliefs or thoughts are challenged by others
- Experience an increase in anxiety, fear and suspicion
- Can be extremely reluctant to interact in social settings or participate in ordinary functions of daily life

# Signs of Mental Illness

## Verbal Signs

1. Repetitive word use, sometimes rhyming  
loose word associations
2. Jumping around from topic to topic without finishing
3. Putting thoughts together that are unrelated, “Word Salad” all jumbled up like a tossed salad
4. Extreme or inappropriate verbal hostility or excitement especially if the level of intensity does not match the situation

## Visual Signs

1. Inappropriate or bizarre appearance- clothing not appropriate to the season
2. Not attending to personal hygiene
3. Agitation- pacing, threatening gestures, flies off the handle easily
4. Slow, sluggish movements
5. Uncoordinated, clumsy, gross motor skills, unsteady on feet
6. Unemotional, flat facial expression or lack of emotional response
7. Impulsivity
8. May have caused injury to self



# Suicide Risk Red Flags

- **Stressful Life Events:**

- ❖ Loss of health
- ❖ Loss of autonomy/independence
- ❖ Loss of family and friends
- ❖ Change in important roles

- **Signs:**

- ❖ Refusal to eat
- ❖ Refusal to take medication
- ❖ Medical non-compliance
- ❖ Withdrawing/isolating
- ❖ Saying goodbye to friends/family
- ❖ Giving away cherished items/possessions





# Suicide Risk- What to do

- ❖ Take it seriously- don't ignore it or assume others are already aware
- ❖ Involve others- Talk with the Nurse or Treatment Team
- ❖ Talk with the resident about what you are seeing and what would be helpful
- ❖ Develop a plan- Use safety precautions (staff monitoring, medication, sharps/plastic utensils, check room for safety)
- ❖ Contact Mobile Crisis
- ❖ Know your Policy and Procedures



# To have successful interactions with residents, its important to :



Understand their experiences and how they perceive their surroundings



Remember that mental illness is not a choice any more than asthma or diabetes is a choice



Know that loud, busy, chaotic environments can cause under stress on those with mental illness

# Questions?



# Resources

- ❖ 988: Suicide and Crisis Lifeline
- ❖ 211 Connecticut: a free, confidential information and referral service that connects people to essential health and human services 24 hours a day, seven days a week online and over the phone. 211 is fully certified in crisis intervention by the American Association of Suicidology and is certified by InformUSA.
- ❖ The NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Helpline, a resource from the National Alliance on Mental Illness, can be reached by calling 1-800-950-NAMI (6264), texting "HELPLINE" to 62640, or emailing [info@nami.org](mailto:info@nami.org).