

SOME MENTAL HEALTH TERMS

This section provides a brief glossary of terms written in a youth-friendly way and was developed by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Clinicians, Mental Health ACT, for The Coloured Kit. The Youth Coalition of the ACT and the Mental Health ACT Children of Parents with a Mental Illness Project developed the Kit in partnership.

Anxiety is a feeling that something bad is going to happen. You may worry about failing tests at school, thinking that your friends don't like you or you're going to make a fool of yourself. As well as worrying all the time, your body does strange things like your muscles go all tense, you get stomach aches or headaches, feel sick or feel dizzy, you may even worry that you're going to faint, have a heart attack or die! The thing about all these worries is that they are very unlikely to actually happen. This is called Anxiety.

Depression is a mental illness, which affects people's ability to feel happy, and stops them from wanting to do things for long periods of time. Sometimes it makes them very tired and really grumpy for no reason. Sometimes it makes them cry a lot and hide away from people. Depression makes people feel sad, and hopeless for long periods of time.

A **disorder** is a condition that affects the way the mind works. A person with a disorder might think, feel or act differently to how they normally act when they are healthy. It is a serious health problem.

Bipolar Disorder is a mental illness, which affects how a person feels and behaves. There are two phases in a bipolar disorder. People often move between them both. One phase is where a person can be very emotional and highly excited, the person can have difficulty concentrating and believe they do not need much sleep. They can also overspend and believe very grand things about themselves. This stage is called a manic episode. The other phase is when they can feel very sad and lonely and feel bad about themselves. This stage is called a depressive episode. Occasionally people feel excited and sad at the same time. This is called a mixed episode.

Personality Disorder is a broad term and covers a few different types of personality disorders. Sometimes you may hear this disorder called Borderline Personality Disorder, or Paranoid Personality Disorder, or Antisocial Personality Disorder by Mental Health people.

What a Personality Disorder means is that the person interprets what other people do and say differently to how most other people would. For example, the person can seem to get very angry or very sad quickly, more so than other adults you know. This is called finding it hard to "regulate emotions". This is hard for the person, but is also hard for you as you may think you are responsible for them for feeling like this. It also means the person may be very angry and fight a lot with other family members and friends (and even strangers).

They have such difficulty in regulating their strong emotions it means they can lose friends, or find it hard to have a job. Sometimes they feel very judged or rejected, so react very quickly.

A **delusion** is when someone gets confused and they think that something is true when it isn't. For example, they might think that they are very sick and are going to die, even though the Doctors have told them that they are healthy.

A **hallucination** is when someone hears something or sees something that isn't really there. It's like their mind is "playing tricks" on them. Some people might think they can hear people calling out to them, or see people that aren't really there. Experiencing a hallucination or a delusion can be very confusing and sometimes scary.

Paranoia is a symptom of mental illness. It can be very frightening for the person who may have beliefs that there are people who are trying to hurt them, or that they are being followed or spied on. It is very hard for people who are paranoid to trust others.

Psychosis is an illness that makes people think and behave differently to the way they usually would think or behave. For example, they might believe things that aren't true, see and hear things that aren't actually there, say things they usually wouldn't say, become really excited or really sad, and do things they normally wouldn't do.

When a person with **schizophrenia** is unwell, they can experience a lot of different things. They may think they see, hear or feel things that are not really there. Some people with schizophrenia think they can do things, or make others do things, that they really cannot do. They can also become afraid about what others may think or do to them. These experiences can be confusing and scary, and the person can act and talk in very unusual ways. Schizophrenia can also mean a person has trouble communicating, feels down, and is not able to do the things they normally do.

Stress is having lots of worries, tension in our body, and problems that just don't seem to go away. It can make us feel grumpy, sad, cross, and we can find it hard to have fun and enjoy things. Our bodies can feel stress, it can make us feel tight and achy and very tired.

A **Psychiatrist** is a qualified medical doctor who has obtained additional qualifications to become a specialist in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental illness and emotional problems. Psychiatrists are trained both to recognise and treat the effects of emotional disturbances on the body as a whole, as well as the effects of physical conditions on the mind. This is particularly important, as many emotional disturbances affect various parts of the body and physical illnesses can certainly affect the mind. A psychiatrist's medical and psychiatric training allows both the physical and emotional to be kept in perspective.

A **Social Worker** is a trained professional who works with children and families to come up with ways to make their lives better. A Social Worker understands how lots of systems like hospitals, schools, families, friends, and people work and how this mix can effect how we think, feel and behave. A Social Worker will listen and talk to children, their parents and relatives and to their school and important people in their lives to help sort the problems out and to find the best ways of dealing with those problems.

A **Psychologist** is a professional person who has trained at university for between 4-6 years. They are qualified to provide support to people who may be experiencing problems with any aspect of their life, including school, family, and friends. Psychologists can assist by giving people skills so that they can manage their problems and be happier with all aspects of their life.

A **Mental Health Nurse** is especially trained to care for people who suffer from mental illness. Sometimes they train first to look after people with physical illnesses. Then they do more study so they can have the special training to look after people who suffer from Mental illness.

An **Occupational Therapist** is a health care worker who works with people who are mentally ill or physically disabled. The aim of Occupational Therapy is to help people carry out their normal home and work activities and help them develop skills to live independent and useful lives.