



## YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

*Mental illness it's a term used to describe a number of mental health conditions that affect people of all ages, races and genders. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that one in four people will be affected by a mental health disorder at some stages of their lives. No current statistics for South Africa are available, but an older study suggests that a third of South Africa's population will suffer some form of mental disorder during their lifetimes.*

There are a number of different types of mental illness, with both similar and different symptoms. Mental disorders affect how people think, feeling and behave. Many of those with mental illness are reluctant to seek medical treatment for fear of being stigmatised. Lack of education and services as well as poverty may prevent a diagnosis or even lead to misdiagnosis.

Without treatment, symptoms are likely to worsen and the person's quality of life will decline as they become unable to cope with the demands of daily life. Personal and professional relationships may suffer, impacting on the individual's career and family.

In the majority of cases, once a diagnosis is made, symptoms can be managed with medication and psychotherapy or a combination of both. The first step towards recovery is recognising that you need help. The second is reaching out to a person or organisation who can assist you.



### Depression

Depression is a very common mental illness and a leading cause of disability throughout the world. Most people do feel a little down at times but when feelings become difficult to handle or begin to affect your quality of life, you must consider professional help. Depression may be described as mild, moderate or severe.

There are also different types of depression – major depression, postpartum depression, seasonal affective disorder and others.

### Symptoms

- low mood – feeling sad, angry, guilty, irritable
- not wanting to do things you once enjoyed
- withdrawing from friends and family
- changes in eating and/or sleeping

habits (more or less)

- feeling constantly tired and/or unable to concentrate

### HELP



Reach out to a family member, friend or health care professional. Eighty percent of depression cases can be treated with medication and/or psychotherapy or a combination of both.



### Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

A common mental health condition in South Africa that can affect people of all ages. PTSD is triggered by a traumatic ordeal – the person may be directly involved, have witnessed the incident, or have a loved one who was directly involved.



### Symptoms

- flashbacks of the traumatic event
- nightmares
- severe anxiety
- distressing thoughts
- depression
- trouble sleeping/staying asleep
- mood changes
- trouble concentrating

### HELP



If you suspect PTSD, see your health care professional or contact any of the organisations listed in the box 'Where to get help'. Treatment comprises medication and/or psychotherapy.



### Bipolar disorder

Bipolar disorder causes changes in a person's mood – not ups and downs of life, but rather periods of alternative moods - extreme highs or severe depression. Episodes may last hours, day or months. Bipolar disorder can have a big impact on daily life and affects the individual's relationships, family and career. Symptoms in manic and depressive episodes differ.

#### Symptoms - manic episode

- high energy, restlessness
- great mood
- irritability/racing thoughts
- high spending/poor judgement
- little sleep
- rapid speech
- difficulty concentrating
- binge eating/drinking, possible drug use

#### Symptoms - depressive episode

- severe depression
- decreased interest in activities
- suicidal thoughts

- change in appetite
- too much or too little sleep
- feelings of worthlessness

### HELP



Bipolar is a chronic illness that needs a professional diagnosis and proper treatment. Treatment plans combine medication with psychotherapy, lifestyle changes and support from loved ones. You can see your medical doctor first and he or she will refer you to a psychiatrist.

### Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD)

People with GAD suffer with extreme anxiety, worry and tension about a number of situations. They worry constantly and expect disaster – they are unable to relax and may find it difficult to concentrate. If the disorder is severe, it can be debilitating and work and family relationships may suffer. Mental worry is accompanied physical symptoms. GAD is diagnosed if the person spends six months or more worrying about various problems or situations.

#### Symptoms

- unable to relax – constantly feeling anxious
- trouble sleeping – worry
- headaches and muscular tension
- sweating
- nausea

### HELP



Share your feelings with a family member or friend, general practitioner or contact one of the organisations listed in 'Where to get help' box. With medication and/or psychotherapy and certain lifestyle changes you can learn how to control your anxious feelings.

#### Resources

- Mental Health Federation of South Africa.
- South African Depression & Anxiety Support Group
- The World Health Organisation

### Where to get help?

- Adcock Ingram Depression and Anxiety Helpline – **0800 70 80 90**
- Akeso Psychiatric Response Unit – **0861 435 787**
- Department of Social Development Substance Abuse 24 Helpline – **0800 121 314 or SMS 32312**
- Dr Reddy's Helpline – **0800 212 223**
- South African Depression and Anxiety Support Group (SADAG) Mental Health Line - **011 234 4837**
- Suicide Crisis Line – **0800 31 393 or SMS 3139**

### Mental illness – at a glance

There are over **200** defined forms of mental illness, identified into five categories.

#### Anxiety disorder

Includes generalised anxiety disorder (GAD), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic disorder, social anxiety disorder and phobias.

#### Mood disorders

Includes clinical depression, mania, dysthymic disorder, seasonal affective disorder (SAD), postpartum depression and bipolar disorder.

#### Psychotic disorders

Schizophrenia, a serious brain disorder which affects all parts of the person's life. The person has trouble establishing what is real or imaginary and may suffer with hallucinations and delusions.

#### Dementias

Alzheimer's disease, substance-induced dementia (drugs/alcohol), toxin exposure (mercury, lead) and dementia due to a medical health condition (Parkinson's or Huntington's Disease)

#### Eating disorders

Includes anorexia, bulimia and binge eating disorder

#### Resources

[www.triadmentalhealth.org](http://www.triadmentalhealth.org) | [www.allhealth.org](http://www.allhealth.org)