



Mental Health First Aid



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Mental Health First Aid

In India at least 5% of the population lives with a mental illness. Many are reluctant to seek help or might not know where to turn for care. The symptoms of mental illness can be difficult – even when friends and family of someone who appears to be developing a mental illness can tell that something is amiss, they may not know how to intervene or direct the person to proper treatment – which means that all too often, those in need of mental health services do not get them until it is too late. As a society, we largely remain ignorant about the signs and symptoms of mental illness, and we ignore our role as responsible community members to help people experiencing these illnesses.

What is Mental Health Problem ?

A mental health problem causes major changes in a person's thinking, emotional state and behavior, and disrupts the person's ability to work and carry out their usual personal relationships.

What is Mental Health First Aid ?

Mental Health First Aid is the help provided to a person developing a mental health problem or in a mental health crisis. The first aid is given until appropriate professional help is received or until the crisis is resolved.

Who need Mental Health First Aid ?

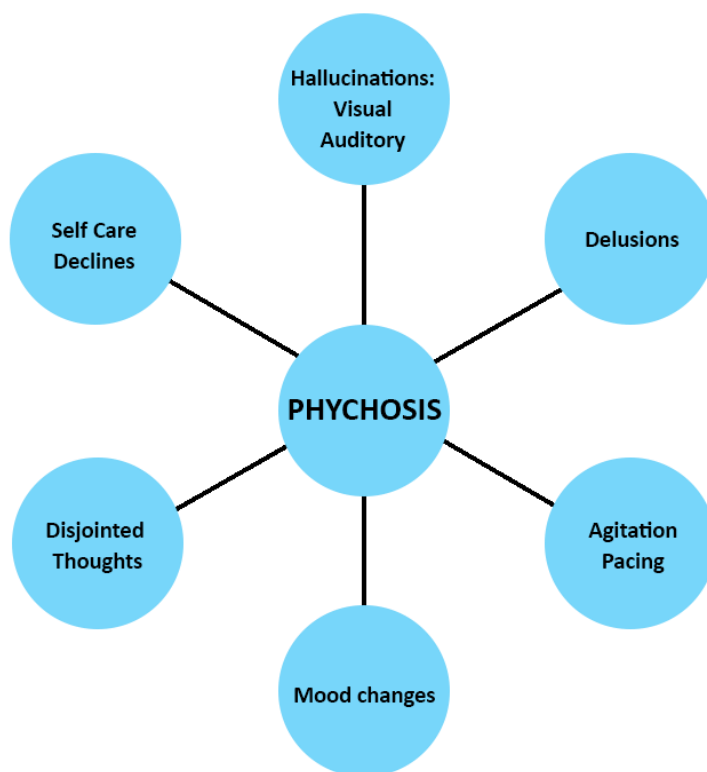
- 1) Children – including adolescents – especially those separated from their caregivers, may need protection from abuse and exploitation. They will also likely need care from those around them and help to meet their basic needs.
- 2) People with health conditions or physical and mental disabilities may need special help to get to a safe place, to be protected from abuse and to access medical care and other services. This may include,
 - a. Frail elderly people
 - b. Pregnant women
 - c. People with severe mental disorders or people with visual or hearing difficulties
- 3) People at risk of discrimination or violence, such as women or people of certain ethnic groups, may need special protection to be safe in the crisis setting and support to access available help.

What are the Common Symptoms of Mental Health Disorders ?

Below are specific symptoms associated with common mental health disorders. These lists are very brief – they are many and varied symptoms that can occur depending on the disorder someone is experiencing and the severity of their illness. However, these should serve as a guide to the types of symptoms associated with many common forms of mental illness.

Psychotic Disorders

Psychosis is a mental disorder in which a person has lost some contact with reality. There may be severe disturbances in thinking, emotions or behaviour. Mental disorders include Schizophrenia, Depression, Anxiety, Bi-Polar Disorder, Substance Use Disorders.



Symptom

Changes in Emotion and Motivation : Depression, anxiety, irritability, suspiciousness, blunted, flat or inappropriate emotion, change in appetite, reduced energy and motivation.

Changes in Thinking and Perception

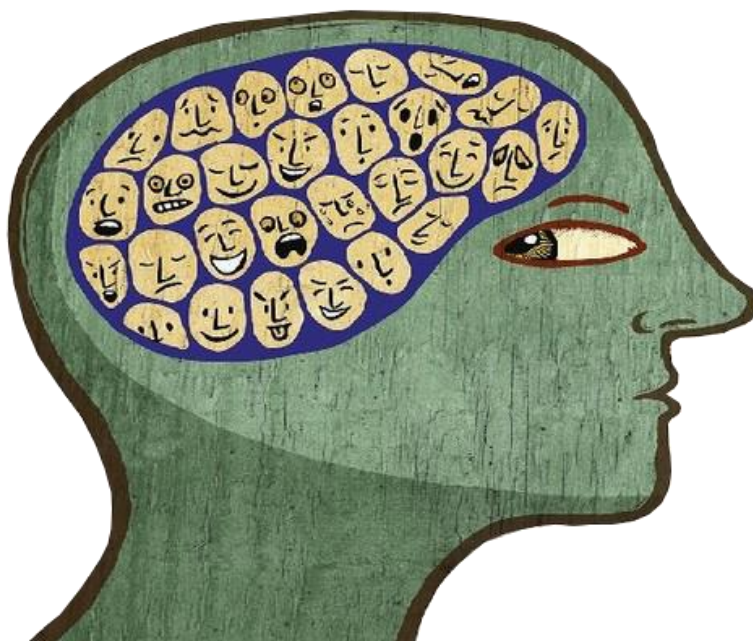
Difficulties with concentration or attention, sense of alteration of self, others or the outside world (e.g. feeling that self or others have changed or are acting different in some way), strange ideas, unusual perceptual experiences (such as a reduction or greater intensity of smell, sound or color), delusions, hallucinations.

Changes in Behavior

Sleep disturbance, social isolation or withdrawal, reduced ability to carry out work or other roles.

Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is mental disorder that generally appears in late adolescence or early adulthood. Schizophrenia is a chronic and severe mental disorder that affects how a person thinks, feels and behaves. People with schizophrenia may seem like that they have lost touch with reality.



Major symptoms :

Delusions

The patient has false beliefs which can take many forms, such as delusions of persecution, or delusions of grandeur. They may feel others are attempting to control them through remote control. Or, they may think they have extraordinary powers and gifts.

Hallucinations

hearing voices is much more common than seeing, feeling, tasting, or smelling things which are not there; however, people with schizophrenia may experience a wide range of hallucinations.

Thought disorder

the person may jump from one subject to another for no logical reason. The speaker may be hard to follow.

Other symptoms may include :-

Lack of motivation (avolition)

the patient loses their drive. Everyday actions, such as washing and cooking, are abandoned.

Poor expression of emotions

responses to happy or sad occasions may be lacking, or inappropriate.

Social withdrawal

when a patient with schizophrenia withdraws socially, it is often because they believe somebody is going to harm them.

Unaware of illness

as the hallucinations and delusions seem so real for patients, many of them may not believe they are ill. They may refuse to take medication for fear of side-effects, or for fear that the medication may be poison, for example –

Cognitive difficulties

The patient's ability to concentrate, remember things, plan ahead, and to organize their life are affected. Communication becomes more difficult.

Depression

Clinical depression lasts for at least two weeks and affects a person's emotions, thinking, behavior and physical wellbeing.



Symptoms

Emotional : Sadness, anxiety, guilt, anger, mood swings, lack of emotional responsiveness, helplessness, hopelessness.

Psychological

Frequent self-criticism, self-blame, pessimism, impaired memory and concentration, indecisiveness and confusion, tendency to believe others see you in a negative light, thoughts of death and suicide.

Behavioral

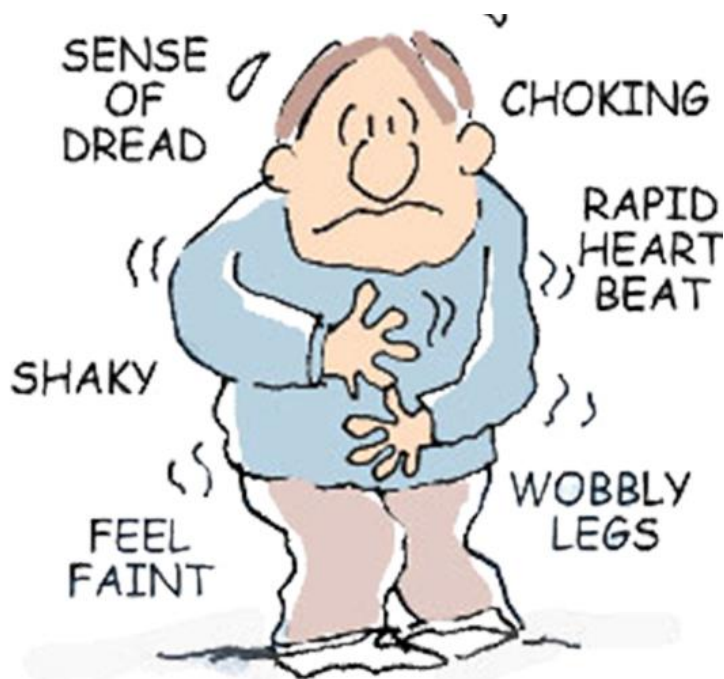
Crying spells, withdrawal from others, worrying, neglect of responsibilities, loss of interest in personal appearance, loss of motivation, drug or alcohol use.

Physical

Chronic fatigue, lack of energy, sleeping too much or too little, overeating or loss of appetite, constipation, weight loss or gain, irregular menstrual cycle, loss of sexual desire, unexplained aches and pains.

Anxiety

An anxiety disorder differs from normal stress and anxiety. It is more severe and long-lasting, and interferes with work and relationships. Anxiety disorders include Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Panic Disorder, Social Phobia, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Obsessive/Compulsive Disorder.



Symptoms:

Physical

Heart palpitations, chest pain, rapid heartbeat, flushing, hyperventilation, shortness of breath, dizziness, headache, sweating, tingling and numbness, choking, dry mouth, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle aches, restlessness, tremors/shaking.

Psychological

unrealistic and/or excessive fear and worry, mind racing or going blank, decrease concentration and memory, indecisiveness, irritability, impatience, anger, confusion, restlessness or feeling "on edge" or nervousness, tiredness, sleep disturbance, vivid dreams.

Behavioral

Avoidance of situations, obsessive or compulsive behavior, distress in social situations, phobic behavior.

Bi-Polar Disorder

Bi-Polar Disorder is characterized by extreme mood swings. A person with Bi-Polar disorder may have periods of depression, mania, and normal mood, but must have episodes of both depression and mania to be diagnosed as having Bi-Polar Disorder. Bi-Polar Disorder used to be called Manic-Depressive Disorder. Symptoms include those for both depression and mania.



Symptoms :

Depressive Symptoms :

Sadness, anxiety, guilt, anger, lack of emotional responsiveness, helplessness hopelessness, self-criticism, self-blame, pessimism, impaired memory and concentration, indecisiveness and confusion, thoughts of death and suicide, crying spells, withdrawal from others, worrying, neglect of responsibilities, loss of interest in personal appearance, loss of motivation, chronic fatigue, lack of energy, overeating or loss of appetite, constipation, weight loss or gain, loss of sexual desire.

Manic Symptoms :

Increased energy and overactivity, elated mood, needing less sleep than usual, rapid thinking and speech, lack of inhibitions, grandiose delusions, lack of insight.

Substance Use Disorders

Substance use disorders can refer to substance use or substance dependence. Signs and symptoms of substance use disorders may include :



Physical Signs:

- Inability to sleep, awake at unusual times, unusual laziness
- Loss of or increased in appetite, changes in eating habits
- Cold, sweaty palms, shaking hands
- Red, watery eyes, pupils larger or smaller than usual
- Unusual smells on breath, body or clothes
- Extreme hyperactivity, excessive talkativeness
- Slowed or staggering walk, poor physical coordination
- Needle marks on lower arm, leg or bottom of feet
- Nausea, vomiting or excessive sweating
- Tremors or shakes of hands, feet or head.
- Irregular heartbeat
- Runny nose, hacking cough
- Puffy face, blushing or paleness
- Frequent rubbing of the nose
- Frequent twisting of the jaw, back and forth

Behavioral Signs :

- Change in overall attitude/personality with no other identifiable cause
- Drop in grades at school or performance at work; skips school or is late for school
- Change in activities or hobbies
- Chronic dishonesty
- Sudden oversensitivity, temper tantrums, or resentful behavior
- Difficulty in paying attention; forgetfulness
- General lack of motivation, energy, self-esteem, “I don’t care” attitude
- Change in habits at home; loss of interest in family and family activities
- Paranoia
- Giddiness
- Irritability, or nervousness
- Excessive need for privacy; unreachable
- Secretive or suspicious behavior
- Car accidents
- Change in personal grooming habits
- Possession of drug
- Changes in friends; friends are known drug users
- Unexplained need for money, stealing money or items
- Possession of a false ID card.
- Missing prescription pills

Social changes :

- Sudden change in friends, favorite hangouts, and hobbies
- Legal problems related to substance use
- Unexplained need for money or financial problems
- Using substances even though it causes problems in relationships

Signs of Intoxication by Specific Drug

Marijuana (Ganja) :

Glassy, red eyes, loud talking and inappropriate laughter followed by sleepiness; a sweet burnt scent, loss of interest, motivation, weight gain or loss

Alcohol :

Clumsiness, difficulty walking, slurred speech, sleepiness, poor judgment, dilated pupils

Cocaine, Crack and other Stimulants :

Hyperactivity, euphoria, irritability, anxiety, excessive talking followed by depression or excessive sleeping at off times; go long periods of time without eating or sleeping, dilated pupils, weight loss; dry mouth and nose.

Heroin :

Needle marks, sleeping at unusual times; sweating, vomiting, coughing and sniffing, twitching, loss of appetite, contracted pupils, no response of pupils to light.

Depressants : (including barbiturates and tranquilizers)

Seems drunk as if from alcohol but without the associated odor of

Warning Signs and Symptoms of Mental Health Crisis or Distress



- Physical symptoms (for example, shaking, headaches, feeling very tired, loss of appetite, aches and pains)
- Crying, sadness, depressed mood, grief
- Anxiety, fear
- Being “on guard”
- Worry that something really bad is going to happen
- Insomnia, nightmares
- Irritability, anger
- Aggressive / violent behavior
- Guilt, shame (for example, for having survived, or for not helping or saving others)
- Confused, emotionally numb, or feeling unreal or in a daze
- Appearing withdrawn or very still (not moving)
- Not responding to others, not speaking at all
- Disorientation (for example, not knowing their own name, where they are from, or what happened)
- Attempted suicide

Why Mental Health First Aid?



- To reduce stigma
- Mental health problems are common
- Professional help is not always on hand
- People often do not know how to respond
- Preserve life when a person may be a danger to self or others
- Help others to identify, prevent or intervene early when mental health challenges occur
- Promote and enhance recovery



KNOW
THE SIGNS



LEARN THE
ACTIONS



BE A
LIFELINE

How you can help?

The Five Basic Steps of Mental Health First Aid

Assess risk of suicide or harm

- Closely observe the person
- Encourage verbalization to know about any suicidal thought/intent of self harm/violence

Listen non-judgmentally

- Listen without interrupting
- Ask appropriate questions to make sure you are both clear on what is being said
- Listen to the word and tone of voice and watch their body language
- Restate what the person has said
- Summarize facts and feelings

Give reassurance and information

- Tell the person you want to help them
- It is a common illness
- Services are available to help

Encourage the person to get appropriate professional help

- Family doctor or physician
- Mental health team

Encourage self-help strategies

Encourage ventilation or free expression of feelings/suffering (The self-help strategies may help but should not be the main source of treatment).

Some people may only be mildly distressed or not distressed at all. Most people will recover well over time, especially if they can restore their basic needs and receive support such as help from those around them and/or Mental Health First Aid. However, people with either severe or long-lasting distress reactions may need more support than Mental Health First Aid alone, particularly if they cannot function in their daily life or if they are a danger to themselves or others. Make sure that severely distressed people are not left alone and try to keep them safe until the reaction passes or until you can find help from health personnel, local leaders or other community members in the area. Also, look for people among the affected population who are likely to need special attention for their care and safety.



An oasis for Troubled Minds

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