

Psychosis

(Easy Reading Version)



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Psychosis is a symptom, not an illness. It is when a person can't understand what is real and what is not. Psychosis is usually gradual and can come and go in episodes. Young adults are more likely to have an episode of psychosis. However, a psychotic episode can happen at any age.

Range of Psychosis Symptoms

- **Hallucinations:** seeing, hearing or feeling things that aren't really there.
- **Delusions:** holding on to untrue or strange beliefs.
- **Disorganized behavior or thinking:** saying things that don't make sense, doing strange things.

Risk Factors: There is still a lot to learn about psychosis, but a mix of genetics and life stressors (illness, substance use, and trauma) is thought to trigger it.

Early Warning Signs: It's best to treat psychosis as early as possible. If you treat it early, there's a chance of stopping it from getting worse. Some warning signs are:

- A drop in grades or job performance
- Trouble thinking clearly or concentrating
- Always being "on their guard" around other people
- A drop in self-care (no longer bathing, not brushing teeth)
- Spending a lot more time alone than usual
- Emotions that are too strong or having no feelings at all

Getting Help: Psychosis is often scary, confusing, and stressful for the person going through it. It can also be difficult for families to understand. A mental health professional can recommend a treatment plan.

- **First Episode Programs:** focus on psychosis and crisis treatment in teens and young adults. They use a model called Coordinated Specialty Care. This is a team approach and often includes psychotherapy, medication, case management, education, and peer support.
- If a First Episode Psychosis program is not available or is not appropriate, getting an evaluation from a mental health professional is the first step towards getting help.

How to talk to someone having psychosis:

- Take deep breaths to help keep your own feelings in check.
- Use a neutral, calm, and quiet voice.
- Empathize with their feelings, even if you don't agree with what they are believing. For example, say: "It must be scary to feel like people are watching you." You can agree that they are scared, even if you don't agree that people are watching them.
- **DO NOT** argue or debate what is real or not: counting to 3 before you say something can help.
- Use short, simple sentences.
- Call your county crisis line for help.