What is psychosis?

Psychosis is the term used to describe a type of mental health issue that seriously affects the way that a person thinks or feels and where the person can lose contact with reality.

This type of mental health problem can happen to anyone and is much more common than most people realise. Sometimes people can have a one-off episode and they get better and never experience psychosis again.

Other people may have episodes that come and go and they can be well for long periods in between.

If someone is experiencing psychosis they may:

- Feel very anxious or agitated.

- Have very low or high moods.

- Think that people are against them and they may hear voices or sounds that aren't real.

- Some people also have what are called delusions – beliefs about something that isn't true.

The two most common forms of psychotic mental illnesses are schizophrenia and bipolar disorder and for both, it is important that a person gets help from a mental health specialist.

Understanding what causes psychosis is complicated since it seems that lots of things can play a part. These include a person's genes (the information that gets passed from one generation to another through families) and also things that can happen in a person's life.

Life stresses that can play a role include:

- Experiencing bullying or problems with family and friends.

- Losing someone close through bereavement.

- Not eating or sleeping enough (perhaps as a result of working too much).

- Taking drugs like cannabis.

Find out more

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