

# What is Mental Illness?



**MDAM**  
MOOD DISORDERS  
ASSOCIATION OF MANITOBA  
WESTMAN

*Helping People Help Themselves*

Compiled by 2023 Green Team

## What is Mental Illness?

A wide spectrum of mental health issues that affect your emotion, mood, thinking, and behaviour are referred to as mental illnesses. (Morin, 2019) Your general emotional state or mood, which affects your capacity to operate, is twisted or inconsistent with the circumstances if you have a mood disorder. (Mayo Clinic, 2018b)

## Types of Mental Illnesses

There are several different types of mental illnesses. Some examples include:

- Mood Disorders
- Anxiety disorder
- Personality Disorders
- Obsessive-Compulsive and Related Disorders
- Schizophrenia Spectrum and Other Psychotic Disorders

(Morin, 2019)

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## **Mood Disorders**

A mood disorder is a type of mental illness that primarily impacts your emotional state and wellbeing. They may produce long-lasting, profound grief, mood swings, and/or rage. Mood disorders include (not limited to):

- Depression and its subtypes.
- Bipolar disorder and its subtypes.
- Premenstrual dysphoric disorder.

(Cleveland Clinic, 2018)

## **Anxiety Disorders**

People who suffer from anxiety disorders usually worry and fret excessively over commonplace events. Panic attacks, which are abrupt, strong emotions of fear or terror that peak within minutes, are frequent symptoms of anxiety disorders.

(Mayo Clinic, 2018a)

These feelings of anxiety and panic interfere with daily activities, are difficult to control, are out of proportion to the actual danger and can last a long time. Ex. General anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder (social phobia), specific phobias and separation anxiety disorder. Anxiety may occur with an existing mood disorder diagnosis. (Mayo Clinic, 2018a)

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## Obsessive-Compulsive and Related Disorders

Obsessions are characterized by intrusive unwanted thoughts, desires, images, or impulses. Common obsessions include a need for cleanliness, concerns about germs, fear of doing something blasphemous or harming others, and a desire for symmetry or doing things "the right way" (Cognitive & Behavioural Consultants, n.d.).

- **Body dysmorphic disorder** - Body dysmorphic disorder patients are distracted or obsessed with one or more perceived defects in their physical appearance. This interest or obsession frequently concentrates on one or more physical characteristics or parts of the body, such as the nose, hair, or skin. (Cowden, 2019)
- **Hoarding disorder** - A persistent difficulty getting rid of or parting with goods because you feel the desire to save them is known as hoarding disorder. When you consider getting rid of the objects, you could feel distress. Regardless of their true value, you progressively accumulate or keep a lot of things. (Mayo Clinic, 2023)



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- **Obsessive-compulsive disorder** - Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is characterized by a pattern of unpleasant thoughts and fears that compel you to engage in repetitive behaviours. These compulsive thoughts and behaviours disrupt daily life and cause severe discomfort. (Mayo Clinic, 2020b)

## **Personality Disorders**

A personality disorder is defined as a long-lasting pattern of thinking, feeling, and behaviour that differs from cultural norms, creates distress or functional difficulties. Usually starting in late adolescence or early adulthood, the pattern of experiences and behaviour leads to unhappiness or functional difficulties. (Robitz, 2013)

- Antisocial personality disorder
- Avoidant personality disorder
- Borderline personality disorder
- Narcissistic personality disorder

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## Schizophrenia Spectrum and Other Psychotic Disorders

- Mental illnesses known as psychotic disorders are characterized by an altered interaction with reality and frequently accompanying behavioural changes. (Moawad, 2022)
- Psychosis is the main symptom of a group of mental health illnesses that include the schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorders. Hallucinations (sensory experiences that are not real) and/or delusions (persistent false convictions that are not grounded in reality) are both components of psychosis. (Jones, 2021)
  - Schizophrenia
  - Schizoaffective disorder
  - Schizophreniform disorder
  - Delusional disorder

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## Trauma and Stress Related Disorders

Trauma-related disorders are conditions associated with traumatic experiences. They include PTSD, adjustment disorder, and anxiety and depression disorders. However, trauma is not restricted to particular mental health disorders. It is an experience that can have overlapping, long-lasting effects on mental and physical health. Some related disorders include:

- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Reactive attachment disorder (RAD)
- Disinhibited social engagement disorder (DSED)
- Acute stress disorder (ASD)

(Gillette, 2023)



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## Substance Related and Addictive Disorders

A person who suffers from substance use disorder (SUD) has trouble controlling their use of drugs, alcohol, or other substances, whether they are legal or illegal. SUD is a curable mental illness that affects a person's brain and conduct. Addiction is the most severe form of SUD, with symptoms ranging from mild to severe. (National Institute of Mental Health, 2023)

Regular drug or alcohol users are more likely to experience mood disorders. This is due to the fact that addiction can alter brain chemistry, which can result in mood swings and other mental health issues.

- Additionally, the stress that addiction places on a person's relationships may cause them to become isolated from support, which increases the risk of mood disorders. (San Antonio Recovery Center, 2022)
- People who battle with substance use disorder (SUD) may also develop mental health disorders, and people with an existing mental illness may struggle with substance use. (National Institute of Mental Health, 2023)

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