



Psychosis occurs when an individual loses contact with reality, resulting in severe disruptions in thinking, emotion, and behavior. Psychosis can have a serious impact on a person's life. Relationships, work, school, other usual activities, and self-care can be difficult to initiate or maintain. Psychosis can be present with many disorders including post-traumatic stress disorder, schizophrenia, psychotic depression, bipolar disorder, schizoaffective disorder, and drug-induced psychosis. Symptoms for psychosis usually begin in late adolescence or early adulthood.

Psychosis affects the way a person thinks, feels and acts

Symptoms include:

- Hallucinations (hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling, or feeling things that are not there)
- Delusions (fixed beliefs that are false, such as that one is being watched or followed)
- Disordered/confused thinking and difficulty concentrating
- Rapid changes in mood/feelings
- Behavior changes including not taking care of or grooming oneself as usual or laughing at inappropriate times

One of the problems in psychosis is that the condition causes the brain to take in too much information all at once, which can leave a person feeling very overwhelmed. Also, the brain has a hard time seeing the differences between what is "real," what is a "dream", and what is a "fantasy." Individuals can believe that the information that their brains are giving them is real and occurring even when it is clear to others that it is not.

Why is this important?

Experiencing symptoms of psychosis may disrupt a child's life. When psychosis is detected early, many problems can be prevented and the greater the chances are of a successful recovery. Mental illnesses with psychosis often develop between ages 15 to 25. This is a critical stage of life when teens and young adults are developing their identities, forming relationships, and planning for their future.

At school, a young person may

- Appear unmotivated
- Distance themselves from peers
- Show a decline in completing work, not do as good a job as they used to, or miss school
- Have inappropriate or no reactions to others
- Do things to drown out auditory hallucinations (e.g. listening to music on headphones in class)

These behaviors can all have an impact on school achievement, and some may result in disciplinary responses.

What can educators do about it?

Treatment for psychosis often involves the following:

- Learning treatment options and working with professionals
- Working with a mental health professional to learn coping skills
- Working with a physician to determine how medications can help
- Working with professionals that specialize in helping youth and young adults to manage relationships and jobs

Resource Links

Maryland Early Intervention Program (EIP)

Offers specialized programs with expertise in early identification, evaluation, and comprehensive psychiatric treatment of adolescents and young adults at risk for, or in the early states of mental illness with psychosis.
www.marylandeip.com

For Teachers: How to identify and refer students with psychosis, a medical condition of the brain

ReachOut Psychosis Tour - February 2009
<http://www.reachoutpsychosis.com/family/psychosis-a-medical-illness-of-the-brain-how-to-spot-and-stop-psychosis-early/>

National Association of Special Education Teachers

<https://www.naset.org/>

Early Psychosis Intervention Clinic Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center

Treats adolescents and young adults ages 14 to 24.
For information call (410) 955-5212 or contact Krista Baker, LCPC at kbaker1@jhmi.edu
https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/psychiatry/specialty_areas/schizophrenia/patient_information/treatment_services/early_psychosis.html



an initiative of



The Children's Mental Health Matters Campaign, an initiative of the Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD), receives funding from the Maryland Department of Health – Behavioral Health Administration, the Maryland Family Network, and community sponsors. Together with the Maryland Coalition of Families, National Center for School Mental Health, MANSEF, and hundreds of community champions, we work to raise public awareness and acceptance of the importance of children's mental health to overall child and family wellbeing. We are grateful to the National Center for School Mental Health for their collaboration in creating these resources for families.