

Equal Opportunities Commission

How to Support Employees with Mental Health Conditions at Work

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A mental health survey in 2022 indicates that over 50% of Hong Kong people have poor mental health and almost half showed clinical symptoms of depression. Mental health issues still remain a concern but it provides opportunities to improve our mental health as we become more aware of our mental state. It is totally OKAY to not feel okay as everyone may have a mental health difficulty at any given time. Therefore, proactively taking care of our mental health and seeking professional help early when needed is crucial for alleviating related distress.

About the Guide

Purpose of the Guide

The EOC cares about the needs of persons with disabilities (PWDs), including persons with mental health conditions (PMHCs). This Guide aims to help employers and managers understand how to better support employees with mental problems, explains mental health stigma and discrimination and shares the lived experience of PMHCs. It also provides examples of reasonable accommodation and what employers and employees need to know to create a mental health-friendly work environment free of discrimination and harassment.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The purpose of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by all PWDs, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. Article 27 of UNCRPD recognises the right of PWDs to work, on an equal basis with others, the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to PWDs.

Disability Discrimination Ordinance

Under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (Cap. 487) (DDO), the definition of disability is broad and includes a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour. It also covers a disability that presently exists; previously existed but no longer exists; may exist in the future; or is imputed to a person. Hence, a person with mental illness or ex-mental illness is protected under the DDO. The DDO offers protection against disability discrimination and harassment in certain public domains, including employment, and applies to employees hired by an establishment in Hong Kong, and who perform their work wholly or mainly in Hong Kong.

1. Promoting Mental Health at Work

Why Support Mental Health at Work?

Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables us to cope with the stressors in life, realise our abilities, learn and work well, and contribute to our community. At work, promoting mental health is just as important as providing a safe and healthy work environment for employees. Improving mental health of employees can help them build resilience to cope with work-related stress, handle challenges, become more productive and enhance work performance. As a result, it will increase staff motivation, develop positive work relationships, and also retain valuable talents in the long run.

Mental Health Stigma and Discrimination

Mental illness is often associated with negative stereotypes. According to the EOC's commissioned research "Study on Perceptions of Stigmatization and Discrimination of Persons with Mental Illness in the Workplace" (the EOC Study), the common stigmatisation towards people with mental illness by employed persons included "I am worried that they would harm others"; "I will try to keep a distance from them; and "I am afraid of being alone with them". Due to mental health stigma and discrimination, PMHCs may stop to seek help and treatment which in turn makes their mental problems worse.

What is Stigma?

Stigma means the negative social attitude attached to a characteristic of an individual that may be regarded as a mental, physical, or social deficiency. It implies social disapproval and can lead unfairly to discrimination against and exclusion of the individual.

Stigmatised beliefs will not be conducive to the recovery process of PMHCs and harm their self-esteem when PMHCs perform their job duties or engage in social interactions.

“Because many times, people tend to label individuals like us. Over a decade ago, there wasn't as much information available or widespread awareness about mental health issues. So, we rarely spoke openly about it.” (Male, approx. 40-49 years old, diagnosed with depression more than 10 years ago)

“It seems like some people think you're mentally ill and they're being overly critical, fearing that you might go crazy or something. They also think that your work efficiency might not be as good, so they get very nitpicky.” (Female, approx. 30-39 years old, diagnosed with bipolar disorder around 10 years ago)

At work, some PMHCs may not want to express their needs for fear of being labeled:

“So now I have to go for follow-up appointments, but I won't apply for sick leave. Employees are allowed to take time-off for follow-up visits or seeing a doctor, but I won't take it. I'd rather use my annual leave to see the doctor. Earlier there were subtle criticisms about me taking leaves so frequently.” (Female, approx. 30-39 years old, diagnosed with bipolar disorder around 10 years ago)

What is Discrimination?

The EOC study also revealed the most commonly observed situations of workplace discrimination against PMHCs, such as “not getting hired because of mental illness”, “having fewer opportunities for promotion”, “being paid less than others because of mental illness” and “being assigned to job duties, work location or work shifts that are worse than other employees”. These workplace discrimination against PMHCs are covered by the DDO in the employment setting.

Direct Disability Discrimination

Direct disability discrimination occurs when, in comparable circumstances, you're treated less favourably at work because of your disability.

Examples:

- A hiring manager decided not to make a job offer to a qualified candidate after he had disclosed his past history of bipolar disorder, as the manager believed that persons with an ex-mental illness are unproductive and unreliable.
- An employer cuts you out of training and development opportunities that other counterparts with similar job duties can attend, because you are diagnosed with depression.

Indirect Disability Discrimination

Indirect disability discrimination occurs when a condition or requirement is applied to everyone, but in practice affects PWDs more adversely, is to their detriment, and the condition or requirement cannot be justified.

An example:

A company imposes a new policy that only employees with full attendance will be entitled for any year-end bonus. Employees with mental illness who have regular medical appointments may find it harder to comply with the full attendance policy. Such policy may indirectly discriminate against employees concerned as they will not be entitled for any year-end bonus and if the policy cannot be justified.

Disability Harassment

The DDO also prohibits disability harassment. It means any unwelcome conduct (whether verbal or in writing) towards a person on account of his or her disability, where a reasonable person, having regard to all circumstances, would have anticipated that the person would be offended, humiliated or intimidated. For example, making offensive jokes about a colleague's mental illness by saying "Mentally ill people are crazy and a burden to society".

A real-life example of a PMHC who was treated less favourably by a supervisor in the course of employment: "I actually never disclosed my medical history in the workplace, but later that male manager said, 'You're not honest! Why didn't you tell me about your mental illness?' I'm not sure where he got that information from... Initially, he praised my performance, but as soon as he made that statement, he publicly announced to all my colleagues that I had a mental illness... He immediately changed his attitude and said I couldn't handle the job. Originally, I had signed a full-time contract, but then he told me, 'Now I want you to sign a part-time contract.' I felt... it was very disrespectful, so I quit my job shortly after that day." (Female, approx. 50-59 years old, diagnosed with schizophrenia since she was in secondary school)

A real-life example of a PMHC who felt offended while enquiring about a job over the phone:

"I may have a medical appointment every three to four months, but I didn't mention detailed information to him (prospective employer). So I just told him that I might go for a medical appointment once every three months... And he responded, 'Oh, sorry, we're not a charity!'" (Female, approx. 50-59 years old, diagnosed with schizophrenia since she was in secondary school)

Promoting workplace mental health requires not only practical support and an inclusive environment, but also raising awareness among staff and management team. Through better understanding and open dialogue, we can break stigmas and help PMHCs feel part of the workplace culture.

2. Understanding Mental Health Symptoms

It is estimated that one in seven people will experience a common mental condition during their lifetime. Below are some of the most common mental disorders:

- Mixed anxiety and depressive disorder
- Generalised anxiety disorder
- Depression
- Anxiety disorders including panic disorders, all phobias and obsessive compulsive disorder

Support from family members and colleagues is pivotal, as they can pick up the early signs of mental illness of their closed ones, and walk alongside their recovery journey. It is important for employers and managers to have knowledge and awareness of mental health issues in order to provide the right support to the employees who are struggling with mental health difficulties.

Lived Experience of Persons with Mental Health Conditions

Experience with depression:

"I have no motivation at all. I don't feel like doing anything... my mental state is deteriorating. It's like my attention span has worsened. Because of poor sleep at night, after a few months, I feel scattered and disoriented." (Male, approx. 40-49 years old, diagnosed with depression more than 10 years ago)

Experience with bipolar disorder:

During a manic episode: "When I am irritated, it's really intense, and my thoughts tend to race quickly. I can think of things rapidly... there are so many thoughts jumping around in my mind." "Or it could be part of mania, where you don't need much sleep at all. I can sleep very little or even not sleep at all. Because I have so much energy and feel so energized, I don't need much sleep."

During a depressive episode: "Productivity tends to be lower... It's like you lack the motivation and can't concentrate properly on tasks... You don't feel like socializing or going out. It's not a good time for taking care of personal hygiene."

(Female, approx. 30-39 years old, diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 2017-18)

Experience with schizophrenia:

"I initially experienced hearing voices that would talk to me. Of course, the content wasn't entirely negative, but most of the time, it carried negative aspects." (Male, approx. 30-39 years old, diagnosed with schizophrenia in 2015)

"There was a voice that kept talking to me... it was related to my personal values." "I would feel like people were talking about me, following me, or constantly hearing my own thoughts." (Female, approx. 40-49 years old, diagnosed with schizophrenia in 2008-09)

"When my illness first manifested, I felt like people around me were monitoring me. I heard many voices, and my main symptom was auditory hallucinations. I would hear voices talking about my secrets, such as the amount of money in my bank account or where I lived... But after taking medication, it helped counterbalance those experiences, and things got better." (Female, approx. 50-59 years old, diagnosed with schizophrenia in 1996)

Signs that an Employee may Need Support

Recognising the common symptoms of poor mental health can help you take a proactive approach to connecting employees who have mental health needs with appropriate resources. The following indicators may suggest potential mental health concerns, especially if they persist and begin to interfere with daily functioning:

Emotional signs:

- Excessive worry or nervousness
- Getting overwhelmed or easily upset
- Lose interest or motivation for normal activities
- Suicidal thinking

Physical signs:

- Get sick more often such as headaches, stomach upset
- Hard to fall asleep, waking up frequently
- Looking tired and stressed
- Skip meals or binge eating
- Unexplained aches and pains

Work performance:

- Frequently late for work
- Increased absenteeism
- Struggle with basic and easy tasks
- Hard to concentrate, make decisions and manage multiple tasks
- Avoid certain workplace activities

However, these signs or behaviours may not necessarily indicate that the employee is experiencing mental health issues. If such signs persist and begin to affect their work performance, it is best to respond with empathy and without judgment, when circumstances allow. Some individuals in recovery may have difficulty waking up early for work due to sleep disturbances caused by medication or injections; others may experience reduced concentration due to relapse; or feel fatigued while adjusting to new medication. Specific coping strategies will be discussed in the following section.

3. Addressing Mental Health Challenges at Work

Effective Communication Skills

Two-way communication is the key to facilitate understanding between you and your employees, enabling both sides to retain work relationship while coming up with the most suitable workplace arrangement that can meet PMHCs' needs to perform their necessary job duties.

When employers are aware of a job applicant's mental health condition **BEFORE HIRING**:

Some employers hire individuals in recovery through supported employment services. As these individuals re-enter the workforce, they may face various challenges. Employers can offer understanding and affirmation by focusing on their strengths and allowing them to thrive.

- Employers and direct supervisors may communicate with the employees in advance to understand their conditions or needs, such as noting the types of support that can be provided when symptoms occur
- Treat employees with mental health conditions respectfully in daily interactions, just as you would with any other colleagues
- Assign a patient mentor or colleague to provide guidance and encouragement
- If performance feedback is needed, avoid discussing it when the employee is feeling emotionally unstable. It is advisable to assess the situation first before offering guidance
- Avoid using sensitive or stigmatising terms related to mental health (e.g., “insane,” “abnormal”)
- If the employee experiences relapse and requires treatment for a period, employers may consider offering unpaid leave with the aim of facilitating support for recovery and eventual return to work

When employers learn about an employee's mental health condition **AFTER HIRING**:

I. If your employees who are struggling with mental health issues approach you for assistance:

- i. Think in advance:
 - When and where suit you both to talk privately
 - What boundaries they might need
 - What they need in that particular phase
 - What support is available at work
 - Where to direct them to seek professional help, if needed
- ii. Show empathy and understanding: acknowledge their feeling as it takes courage to talk about mental health issues
 - If they mention to you their mental health conditions but find it difficult to explain, you can ask simple and non-judgmental questions, such as:

“Thank you for sharing that with me. How do you feel?”

“What do you find most challenging right now?”

“What support do you think would be helpful for you?”

“Any medical information from your doctor or professional experts that you would like me to know to understand how your current condition may affect your work?”

- If you have already noticed a change of the employees, you may ask:
“I noticed that you have been... Is it okay to talk about...?”
“Have you encountered any problems at work lately? Want to solve them together?”

- iii. Ensure confidentiality: Always respect and protect privacy. Do not tell or discuss their disability with other colleagues. Their disability information is restricted on a “need-to-know” basis.

Respect & Understanding

“First thing is understanding. Secondly, the supervisor can appropriately assign and adjust their expectations regarding workload...I communicate my needs, they share their expectations, and then we can discuss how to address them together.” (Female, approx. 30-39 years old, diagnosed with bipolar disorder around 10 years ago)

Confidentiality & Trust

"Because I know for sure that I didn't mention it (my mental illness), and then I don't know where they (the supervisor) found out about it, I was accused of being dishonest, lacking integrity, and so on... But it seems like they don't really value confidentiality. “(Female, approx. 50-59 years old, diagnosed with schizophrenia since secondary school)

Disclosing a disability is a personal decision — there is no right or wrong. Some PMHCs are willing to open up to colleagues while some would hide it from others. Everyone has different considerations, and personal boundaries must be respected.

II. If your employees are not able to cope with their mental health issues or show unusual behavioural patterns that causes disruption at work, you should take the initiative to check with the employees:

- Discuss what you have observed from the employees and/or issues raised by other colleagues
- Work out options together to resolve the issues
- Provide tools, resources or temporary arrangements to address workload concerns

- With the employee's consent, you may contact their social worker or family directly to offer timely support

III. If your employees do not mind disclosing their disability, you can explain to other colleagues:

- The nature of the colleague's mental health condition, without getting into further personal details
- Mental illness is treatable
- The workplace adjustments for the colleague concerned
- Encourage other employees to be supportive and create a mentally healthy workplace together

Inherent Job Requirements and Reasonable Accommodation

There is no one-size-fits-all reasonable accommodation in the workplace. What is reasonable for an employee with a particular disability (the employee concerned) may not be for another colleague with a similar disability, and thus employers and managers need to take into account specific disability conditions and inherent job requirements of individual employees. Below are some key pointers to help you gain a better understanding of inherent job requirements (IRs) and reasonable accommodation (RA) before implementing them.

1. Before providing the right RA for the employee concerned, you should identify the inherent requirements (IRs) of the job and assess the abilities of the employee concerned

Meaning of IRs

- IRs refer to the core functions that are intrinsic to the performance of a particular job, which are the essential activities that must be carried out in order to fulfill the primary purpose of the role
- It is important to note that IRs are:
 - the fundamental tasks of jobs that define a job and must be carried out to get the job done
 - not all of the requirements of a job
 - about achieving results rather than the means used to achieve them

Example of IRs

Excellent communication skills for interacting effectively with clients (whereas polite phone etiquette is not the IR). An employee experiencing anxiety disorder may speak with a trembling voice or have difficulty recalling their message. The employee can still communicate effectively with clients by using emails or online chat, and preparing key points in advance

2. It is important for you to understand the meaning and purpose of RA for employees concerned

What does RA mean in the workplace?

- RA is any necessary and appropriate modification or adjustment to a job, an employment practice, or the work environment

- The provision of RA should take into account all relevant facts and circumstances and assess individually, in order to assist the PWD to perform the IRs of the job

Why does RA matter?

- Some PWDs are excluded from jobs in which they are capable of doing simply because of unnecessary barriers in the hiring process and in the workplace
- For example, due to a particular disability, an employee may need a quieter area to handle tasks as crowded environments can disrupt focus, or some may need short breaks at work to recharge during their recovery or treatment
- Providing RA helps PWDs perform their core job duties and enables them to enjoy equal employment opportunities

3. When you receive a request of RA from job applicants or employees, you may wonder who are eligible for RA, and for how long employers are expected to provide RA for them?

- Job applicants, candidates and employees with disabilities can ask for RA. The request can be made based on advice from professional experts (e.g. doctor, medical social worker, occupational therapist).
- RA can be provided at the recruitment and employment stages, including selection, appointment, training, promotion, transfers or any other employment benefit. Please do not assume everyone with a disability requires RA
- There is no explicit provision about the duration and extent of RA stated in the DDO. It can vary depending on the employee's disability condition, the key job requirements of that employee, and the expenditure or resource allocation needed, etc.
- Given that a disability can be temporary or ongoing, RA can be short or long term. If long term adjustments are required, there should be thorough consideration of factors, including the effect on the employer's operations and the size of the company

4. How reasonable do work adjustments have to be?

- Professional advice or medical recommendations given to the employee concerned can assist you to assess the necessity of RA, the type of RA and the timeframe of RA
- The RA provided are practical and feasible that enables the employee concerned to carry out the IRs of a job despite a person's disability
- Reasonableness must be considered to determine whether a RA that can be sought, such as cost and practicability of making an adjustment in relation to the size of the company
- The employers can deny unrealistic accommodations if it will impose unjustifiable hardship (UH) on the employers. For example, it may not be reasonable to placing the employee concerned in a position that they are not qualified for, or granting an indefinite leave of absence, etc.
- According to section 4 of DDO, in determining what constitutes UH, all relevant circumstances of the particular case are to be taken into account including—
 - a) the reasonableness of any accommodation to be made available to a person with a disability
 - b) the nature of the benefit or detriment likely to accrue or be suffered by any persons concerned
 - c) the effect of the disability of a person concerned; and
 - d) the financial circumstances of and the estimated amount of expenditure (including recurrent expenditure) required to be made by the person claiming unjustifiable hardship

5. After careful assessment and granting necessary adjustments, you should also review whether the employee concerned is able to carry out their IRs with the support of RA

- It is good practice to have a regular review or communication to ensure that the adjustments or modifications remain necessary and relevant for the employee concerned
- For example, employees experiencing schizophrenia may have disorganised thinking and difficulty in express thoughts coherently. You can accommodate the employee by breaking down tasks into smaller and manageable steps, with clear instructions and deadlines. Instead of assigning a full project, consider asking the staff to complete certain tasks by a specific date and review progress together At times, a brief RA may be sufficient that can support effectively the employee's needs. For example, an event coordinator has a diagnosis of bipolar disorder and she is unable to concentrate to work in the open area during peak periods. The employer could allow her to work from a closed office environment or wear headphones to help her concentrate in that periods

Employers play a crucial role in supporting employees with mental health conditions — not by attempting to cure the illness, but by creating an environment where employees can perform their core duties effectively. While mental illness may impact a person's thought processes, emotions, and judgment, workplace accommodation could lead to a mutually beneficial outcome for both employers and employees.

Below are some practical accommodation examples for employees facing various types of mental health conditions. Please also consider communicating with the employees concerned regarding their specific circumstances and accommodation (if any is needed):

When your employee faces challenges in staying organised:

- Explain tasks clearly and confirm the employee's understanding
- Email/write work instructions to help minimise confusion
- Break down large assignments into manageable goals and tasks
- Encourage the employee to note down important discussions, use to-do-lists and reminders to help manage time and work priorities
- Allow extra time to prepare and complete tasks
- Set up check-in meetings to support the employee by discussing progress and update, reminding them of key tasks and important deadlines

When your employee faces challenges in tackling stress, anxiety or emotions:

- Offer a quiet space to help employee manage their emotions and relax
- Allow the employee to seek support from their doctor or other professionals during working hours
- Provide advance notice to employee prior to meeting about items to be discussed and his or her role in the meeting
- Provide positive encouragement as appropriate
- Provide workplace support programmes to help employees seek professional assistance

When your employee struggles with maintaining stamina (such as concentration or fatigue):

- Allow the employee to make up for lost time if he or she arrives late to work due to medication changes or sleeping problems
- Individuals in recovery who receive injectable medication treatment may generally feel more fatigued. Allowing flexible rest days after injections gives employees adequate time to recover and rest
- Adjust work hours or allow the employee to work part-time for some time
- Allow short-notice annual leave at your discretion if the employee needs rest due to mental health condition

When your employee faces challenges with social interactions:

- Not making social activities mandatory for all employees
- If the employee is required to regularly meet with colleagues, business representatives or the general public, swapping these tasks with less ‘social’ activities if practicable; provide tasks that could highlight their strengths

Below are some other possible RA adopted by some companies for employees with mental health conditions or other medical needs:

Allowing medical appointments

- Granting time-off or early release for attending medical appointments. Some companies create an internal system for employees to upload their medical certificate and it may not require employees to provide the nature of sickness on the sick leave application form for short period of absence. It ensures that the employee concerned can receive necessary treatment timely and prevents their mental conditions from worsening. It also demonstrates support for employees’ well-being and creates an inclusive workplace.

Granting regular short breaks

- While working without breaks can lead to mental exhaustion and decrease work accuracy, taking a brain break help recharge and refocus. Some companies grant a 10-minute break for every three to four hours of work while some implement a late afternoon break for 20 minutes. Giving the employee concerned a few moments to relax allow them to better manage their stress and reduce fatigue.

Allowing temporary work-from-home when the employee concerned is feeling mentally drained at times

- Remote work has been widely adopted by companies over the past years. Working from home allows individuals to set up the environment that suits their disability conditions, as sometimes

the employee concerned may require a quieter and more controlled setting; and that the commute stress coming from crowded public transportation can be reduced.

Providing options for flexi-time or flexible start and finish times

- Some companies implement flexi-time reporting hours (e.g., three shifts and may alter with mutual agreement between supervisor and employee) or core hours for daily meetings, team work and communication if the job nature permits. For example, if core hours are set at 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., the employee concerned is required to be present in the office at those hours for work-related activities, while outside of core hours, the employee concerned may determine the individual start and end times with their supervisor, as long the contracted hours are completed. It can give flexibility the employee concerned to set their schedule and work, reducing the risk of burnout.

Below are some good workplace support from PMHC's perspectives:

Hotline & Support service

"I have a job, and on the day I signed the contract with HR, they gave me a support hotline. They said if I have any emotional difficulties, I can call this number. It's a counselor provided through the company's resources, and they assured me that all conversations are confidential. So, I have this backup option. I've been working for a while now, but I haven't made that call yet. But the way HR explained it to me on the day of the contract signing, it made me feel very reassured." (Female, approx. 40-49 years old, diagnosed with schizophrenia in 2008-09)

Inclusion & Acceptance

"I also make mistakes. So, treat me like an ordinary person. If I make a mistake, just tell me and let me know what I did wrong... " (Female, approx. 50-59 years old, diagnosed with schizophrenia since secondary school)

"We hope that employers can be more accommodating and tolerant of our mistakes... because we start off later than the average person, and we're late to engage in work...Because of the experiences we've been through, our way of thinking or making decisions is different from others." (Female, approx. 40-49 years old, diagnosed with schizophrenia in 2008-09)

To actively address workplace mental health challenges, begin by strengthening communication so employees can express their needs in an open and trusting environment. At the same time, balance their ability to perform duties with reasonable adjustments to build an effective work pattern.

4. What You Need to Know

For Employers:

- Embrace workplace diversity with the right mindset and respect the equal opportunity for employment is a prerequisite for acquiring the reputation as an equal opportunities employer
- Focus on the abilities, not disabilities, of employees with mental health challenges and avoid making assumptions about their experiences and capabilities
- Develop an equal opportunities policy in place, which spells out employee protection under the discrimination laws such as legal definition of discrimination and protected characteristics, grievance handling procedure, designated staff for handling discrimination issues
- Provide workplace accommodation is a proactive move to retain talent and increase overall company morale and productivity
- Provide anti-discrimination training to help employees understand unlawful discriminatory behaviour and legal responsibilities
- Offer mental health training that includes mental health first aid and ways to foster positive interaction with colleagues experiencing mental health conditions
- Employees experiencing mental health difficulties may have lower motivation—offer encouragement and recognition, and clearly inform them who they can turn to for support with work-related problems
- Provide mental health information and support services, such as community services and referral pathways, and empower employees to communicate and create a mentally healthy workplace

For Employees:

In Hong Kong, employees have the right to a work environment free of discrimination and harassment. Under the DDO, employees with mental illness have the right to:

- work in a safe workplace
- be protected under the discrimination laws, including DDO. They shall not be treated less favourably due to his/her disability
- file a complaint to the EOC if suffer from disability discrimination, harassment, vilification or victimisation
- access to anti-discrimination-related information from employer, including relevant policy and grievance procedure

- receive training on equal opportunities from employer

Appendix

Common Types of Mental Illnesses

Mental illnesses are health conditions involving changes in emotion, thinking or behaviour (or a combination of these), which can be associated with distress and/or problems functioning in social, work or family activities.

Anxiety disorder

Anxiety disorder is characterised by excessive worry, fear and anticipation of impending danger. Common types of anxiety disorders include:

- Generalised anxiety disorder: the person has multiple excessive worries persisting for few days or even months. Worries include everyday matters such as job, safety of family members, finances, or infections. These worries are often uncontrollable and shifting, and the person is usually overwhelmed by physical symptoms including fatigue, fidgeting, difficulty concentrating, irritability, insomnia.
- Panic disorder: the person has repeated panic attacks when there is no real danger or apparent reason. Physical symptoms include palpitation, shortness of breath, sweating, chest discomfort, dizziness or even feeling of imminent death.
- Specific phobia: the person has excessive and irrational fear to a particular object or situation. In extreme cases, the fear response is prompted by the mere mentioning or sight of visual representations of it, leading to avoidance behaviours. Commonly feared objects and situations include flying, heights, animals, receiving an injection, and seeing blood.
- Social anxiety disorder: the person has persistent strong fears of social situations where others' judgment and evaluation are expected. They would remain quiet in social situations to avoid drawing others' attention. When around other people, they may palpitate, blush, tremble, draw a blank, stutter, sweat, feel dizzy or even have difficulty breathing.
- Obsessive compulsive disorder: it is characterised by thoughts, urges, or images that keep running through a person's mind which produce distress. It is very difficult to ignore it even the person may recognise that these thoughts are meaningless or unreasonable. The person feels compelled to perform repetitive actions (e.g. repeated checking, hand washing, hoarding) or mental acts (e.g. repeat a 'lucky number' in the head) in order to relieve the distress.

Depression

Depression is a common mood disorder, in which a person has symptoms such as persistently depressed mood, loss of interest and energy, and negative thoughts. They feel helpless and lose the ability to experience pleasure. The depressed mood exists for most time of a day and persists for more than two weeks.

Bipolar disorder

Bipolar disorder is a type of mood disorder, in which a person experiences both manic and depressive episodes. During a manic episode: they commonly feel overly happy or irritable, over-confident, full of energy, and has lots of ambitious plans and ideas. During a depressive episode: they experience persistent feelings of sadness, loss of interest in usually enjoyable activities, pessimism, hopelessness, and fatigue. When the disorder is active, the person's mood will swing between depressive and manic phase and it usually lasts several weeks or months.

Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is characterised by significant impairments in the way reality is perceived and changes in behaviour related to persistent delusions, hallucinations, disorganized thinking, highly disorganised behaviour or extreme agitation. The person with schizophrenia often experience persistent difficulties with their cognitive or thinking skills, such as memory, attention, and problem-solving.

Mental Health Resources

Please scan the QR code



Reference Materials

Please scan the QR code



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