



Mental Illness Myths and Facts

Myths & Facts

MYTH: Children don't experience mental health problems.

FACT: Even very young children may show early warning signs of mental health concerns. These mental health problems are often clinically diagnosable, and can be a product of the interaction of biological, psychological, and social factors. Half of all mental health disorders show first signs before a person turns 14 years old, and three quarters of mental health disorders begin before age 24.

MYTH: Attempted or completed suicides happen without warning.

FACT: The survivors of a suicide often say that the intention was hidden from them. It is more likely that the intention was just not recognized. Some warning signs may include:

- The recent suicide or death by other means, of a friend or relative.
- Previous suicide attempts.
- Depression
- Major changes in sleep patterns
- Withdrawal from friends and family or other major behavioral changes.
- Personality Changes

MYTH: People who threaten suicide are just seeking attention.

FACT: All suicide attempts must be treated as though the person has the intent to die. Do not dismiss suicide attempts as simply being an attention-gaining device. It is likely that the young person has tried to gain attention and, therefore, the attention is needed. The attention that they get may well save their lives.

MYTH: Mental illness is the result of bad parenting.

FACT: Children can, and do, have mental health conditions. Research shows that one in five children between the ages of 13 and 18 have or will have a mental illness. In fact, 50% of all lifetime cases begin by age 14. While environmental factors can affect a person's mental health, biological factors can affect individuals just as actively. Mental health conditions are not simply a side effect of parenting, but a combination of influences.

MYTH: Different races are more prone to mental illness.

FACT: All races and ethnicities are affected by the same rate of mental illness. There is no single group of people more likely than others to have a mental health condition. However, some people have cultural influences that may affect how they interpret symptoms of a mental health condition that could prevent them from getting help. In addition, while the rates are the same, awareness of mental illness in varying minority groups is important to highlight, as these groups often times get overlooked in the potential differences of outcomes in mental illnesses.

Myths & Facts (continued)

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MYTH: People with mental illness are “damaged” and different.

FACT: A mental illness does not make someone any less of a person. They are not broken or odd; they just have different experiences that not everyone has to face.

MYTH: Children misbehave or fail in school just to get attention.

FACT: Behavior problems can be symptoms of emotional, behavioral, or mental disorders, rather than merely attention-seeking devices. These children can succeed in school with appropriate understanding, attention, and mental health services.

MYTH: Teenagers don’t really suffer from mental illness, they’re just moody and attention seeking by nature.

FACT: Most serious mental illnesses start in adolescence. Certain behavioral problems can be symptoms to mental health issues, if we don’t look out for these, we could be missing something important.

MYTH: You can never get better from a mental illness.

FACT: Mental health issues are not always lifelong disorders. For example, some depression and anxiety disorders only require a person to take medication for a short period of time. Innovations in medicine and therapy have made recovery a reality for people living with a mental health issue, even chronic conditions. While all symptoms may not be alleviated easily or at all, with the right recovery plan, people can live the productive and healthy lives they’ve always imagined.

