

# COMMON MENTAL DISORDERS AND THEIR SYMPTOMS

## MODULE EIGHT

### Serious Mental Illnesses

#### Depression

- People with depression may have feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or feeling like life isn't worth living. While many people experience some of these symptoms in response to negative life events—like being arrested or incarcerated—major depression (also called "serious," "severe," or "clinical" depression) is a disease characterized by a chemical imbalance in the brain. Major depression may be associated with suicidal thoughts and behavior as well as signs such as excessive sleeping, difficulty sleeping or staying asleep, overeating or lack of eating, significant weight loss, and/or withdrawal from activities or recreation that they normally enjoy. It is also important to note that even "normal" depression can sometimes escalate into crisis situation, so indicators of depression should not be ignored.

#### Bipolar Disorder

- People with bipolar disorder have severe high and low moods with changes in energy, sleep, and behavior. There are different types of bipolar disorder, but most people have more depressive episodes than manic episodes, with these depressive episodes demonstrating the same characteristics as those listed above for 'depression.' Manic episodes are characterized by feelings of great happiness or euphoria, feelings of inflated self-importance, great energy and rapid thought, and sometimes feelings of great creativity or insight. Outward behaviors may include: less need for sleep, unusual talkativeness, talking over people, jumping from one idea to another when talking, restlessness, aggression, starting fights, and engaging in activities they normally don't engage in. It is important to know that persons with bipolar disorder may cycle between manic and depressive phases, may have sudden mood changes, and can have substantial influence on other incarcerated persons during the manic phases--during which the individual is sometimes charming and persuasive.

## Schizophrenia

- People with schizophrenia often have delusions or hallucinations. For example, people with schizophrenia may have false or odd beliefs, hear voices, or see things that other people do not. They may also display disorganized speech or behavior, inappropriate or muted emotions, poor grooming, or withdrawal. It is important to pay attention to individuals with schizophrenia to assure they are performing daily living tasks. Schizophrenia usually begins in late adolescence or young adulthood and can put severe strain on family members of the individual.

## OTHER MENTAL DISORDERS

### Substance Use Disorders

- Substance use disorders are the over use or dependence on drugs or alcohol that can lead to health problems, social problems, or poor decision-making. When there is no longer access to drugs or alcohol, these persons may experience shakiness, feeling cold or sweating, or sleeping difficulty. The vast majority of incarcerated persons have substance use disorders.

### Anxiety/Panic Disorders

- People with anxiety or panic disorders have worrisome or negative thoughts and fears that do not go away over time. They may experience trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, tension headaches, heart palpitations, sweating or shaking, difficulty breathing, or panic attacks.

### Trauma-Related Disorders

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is prevalent among incarcerated persons. The individual re-experiences a traumatic life event through distressing memories, nightmares, and flashbacks. Beyond these symptoms, people with PTSD may also experience outbursts of anger or irritability, difficulty concentrating, and an exaggerated startle response to certain sounds or sights.

## Personality Disorders

- People who have personality disorders have rigid ways of thinking and behaving and often have difficulty relating to other people. They may not recognize that they have a problem, and they do not respond to changes well. Unlike many mental disorders, there is no medication to change a person's personality disorder; counseling and behavioral management are the main treatments for personality disorders. These persons can be disruptive and manipulative, and sometimes dangerous. There are a number of different personality disorders, with the most common being antisocial personality disorder and borderline personality disorder. People with antisocial personality disorder may be deceitful or manipulative for personal gain or pleasure, with little regard for the feelings and rights of others; they tend to lack remorse for consequences of their own acts and often blame others or provide rationalizations for bad behavior. Persons with borderline personality disorder tend to have difficulty managing their emotions and have insecure, intense relationships; they have difficulty trusting others and difficulty maintaining close relationships.

## Cognitive disorders

- Cognitive disorders (e.g., amnesia, dementia, delirium) affect learning, memory, perception, or problem solving. They are typically caused by aging or an injury to the brain. Symptoms may include: confusion, poor motor coordination, loss of short-term or long-term memory, difficulty planning or making decisions, and not remembering who they are or important information about themselves. These disorders can stem from a variety of causes, including injury, illness, and aging.

## Developmental disabilities

- These disabilities begin earlier in life, before the age of 22. They may affect physical, intellectual, or emotional development. Developmental disabilities often relate to physical issues, but some people may have both physical and intellectual challenges related to their disability. Persons with developmental disabilities have functional limitations in several areas, which may include skills such as self-care, language, self-sufficiency, or mobility.