

Psychological distress

MYTHS AND REALITIES



Some background

Psychological distress

An individual shows signs of stress and anxiety following one or more events but has no other diagnosis of mental illness.

Mental illness

- Is a set of disturbances affecting thoughts, emotions and/or behaviour;
- Reflects a biological, psychological or developmental disorder of mental functions;
- Causes an individual distress and/or difficulties in their work or social relations.

Mental illness is not:

- A moral weakness;
- A normal reaction to a traumatic event such as a breakup or job loss;
- A conflict between societal values and an individual's behaviour, such as in cases of fraud, theft or assault.

Mental health

State of wellness in which an individual can reach their potential and cope with normal life situations and the stress they generate.



People don't recover from mental illness.

FALSE! People can and do recover from mental illness.

Today, there are treatments, services and support that can help an individual recover and lead a satisfying and independent life. No one should expect to suffer forever.

When mental illness lasts for an extended period, people can learn to manage their symptoms so they can refocus on their objectives. They can work, volunteer and help their community with their unique skills and abilities.

People who talk about killing themselves aren't serious.

FALSE! Someone who talks about killing themselves must always be taken seriously. We can never know what someone's going through on the inside.

Mental illness is a unique and rare disorder that will never affect me.

FALSE! We will all be affected at some point. Mental illness is more common than cancer, diabetes and heart disease. At least 1 in 5 Canadians will experience mental illness during their lifetime.

If you are not affected yourself, a family member, acquaintance or co-worker probably will be. Every illness has its own causes and requires its own treatment.

Antidepressants lead to addiction.

FALSE! However, when someone starts or stops taking an antidepressant, they may experience side effects (tremors, headache, drowsiness or agitation).

These symptoms generally pass quickly. As needed, ask the physician to adjust the dosage.



People will treat me differently if they find out that I'm living with mental illness or that I love someone who is.

FALSE! There are, of course, exceptions but you would be surprised to learn how compassionate people are. The more we talk about mental illness, the more that myths will fall away.

Social support is very important. We all need to feel we have a place in this world and that others are concerned about our welfare. The loved ones around someone with mental illness are very important to that person's recovery.

My friends and family will have access to my information.


FALSE! No confidential information can be disclosed without the patient's agreement. Everyone has the right to privacy.

However, recovery can be helped if a family member, friend or responsible individual participates in the patient's care. Loved ones are encouraged to participate in their patient's care in collaboration with staff. It is important to accompany and support a patient.

Someone who's hospitalized has no say in their treatment.

FALSE! Any patient has the right to accept or refuse treatments that their care team proposes to aid in their recovery. Their choices will be respected.





Here are some **CONCERNS** that someone may have after an experience with mental illness.

Some people think that by accessing psychiatric care, I was just trying to “attract attention.”

FALSE! I was really suffering emotionally and needed specialized care from health professionals.

I’m a violent and dangerous person because I have a mental illness.

FALSE! I’m no more violent than anyone else. I am, however, at greater risk of being a victim of violence.

I make poor decisions because of my diagnosis.

FALSE! Anyone can make poor choices or do unexpected things. My illness does not define me or my decisions.

People whose behaviour is different due to mental illness can feel terribly embarrassed or ashamed in the presence of others. No one chooses to have mental illness.

Recovery

Recovery is a unique and profoundly personal process of transformation of someone's **attitudes, values, feelings, goals** and **roles**. It's a way of leading a satisfactory, promising and enriching life even with mental illness. Recovery involves giving their life new meaning and new goals and growing beyond the effects of the illness.

Testimonials from people in recovery

"Health professionals and my family were attentive to my needs. They really listened and were very empathetic. They suggested several methods that I chose to use to help me adjust, to become a better person day after day despite my illness."

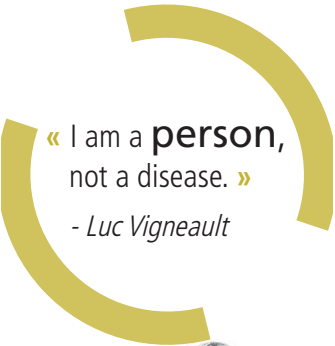
- Jean-Michel Roy, certified Peer Helper

"Support groups have helped me tremendously throughout my recovery. They gave me a lot of support as well as tools that have become precious for me. The things that I have learned through these groups are still part of my life today, as recovery is an ongoing process."

Here are my favourites:

- Symptoms are painful, but they are not dangerous.
- Anticipating an event is always more terrifying than the event itself."

- Jacqueline Powers,
Certified Peer Supporter



« I am a **person**,
not a disease. »

- Luc Vigneault

