

**West Bengal State university**  
**Dept. of Education**  
**Sem-4, Unit-1**  
**Guidance & counselling (Special Paper)**  
**Topic- General Idea of Psychosis**

**Psychosis:**

Psychosis is the experience of loss of contact with reality that is not part of the person's cultural or religious beliefs. A person experiencing psychosis may not know which of their feelings and thoughts are real. They believe the false experiences are actually happening. Psychosis is a symptom of an illness. It is not an illness itself. Psychosis can involve hallucinations: hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling or feeling things that are not there. It can also involve delusions: fixed false beliefs that are not based on reality. These beliefs are often felt as unfounded fear or suspicion. Delusional beliefs do not change when a person is given facts that show they are false. Disordered thought (thoughts that jump between unrelated topics), speech that does not make sense, and changes in feelings and behaviour are also experienced with psychosis. Psychosis can happen to anyone, and it can be treated.

**Symptoms of Psychosis:**

**Hallucinations** Hallucinations—having sensations that others do not feel—can be very scary. People who are having hallucinations often feel alone and worry that they cannot get better. They may not want anyone to know what they are experiencing.

**Hallucinations:**

Hearing voices tell you that you are worthless, that people around you cannot be trusted, that you have superpowers or that you should harm yourself or someone else.

Seeing bright, colourful lights or flashes, religious figures such as God or Christ, or people who are not there. Seeing things that are common in your cultural or religious tradition are not considered hallucinations.

Tasting something that is not there. The taste is often unpleasant. This is more common in psychosis caused by a medical condition than by a mental illness.

Smelling something that has no external cause. The smell is usually unpleasant. Often the person is concerned that the bad smell is coming from them. This is also more common in psychosis caused by a medical condition than by a mental illness.

Feeling as if someone is touching you or that there are bugs under your skin.

**Delusions Delusion:**

**Delusions of paranoia:** The belief that someone or “they” are out to get them. The young person may believe, for example, that their tap water has been poisoned or that people are listening to their thoughts.

**Delusions of reference:** The belief that an event or item holds special meaning for them. A person may believe, for example, that a celebrity on TV is sending them special messages.

**Delusions of grandeur:** The belief that they are an important figure, such as Abraham Lincoln or Napoleon. The person may believe that they have superpowers, such as the ability to fly or tell the future.

**Delusions of control:** The belief that their mind is being controlled by outside forces, such as space aliens or radio waves. Sometimes a person has both delusions and hallucinations. For example, a person may believe that people with red eyes are evil. The person may then start to see red eyes when they look at their loved ones and become very frightened for their family.

### **Phases of Psychosis:**

A psychotic episode caused by a mental illness usually happens in three phases. The phases may not be easy to identify while they are happening. The length of each phase may vary from person to person.

The first phase is called the prodromal phase. Not everyone will experience this phase. This phase occurs before the development of psychotic symptoms. There are vague signs that “things are not quite right.” The person may have a range of mild symptoms that gradually appear and shift over time. They may have some symptoms of psychosis that come once in a while and then go away. Changes in feelings, thought, behaviour and the way they see their surroundings may occur. But clear psychotic symptoms (hallucinations, delusions, or thought disorders) have usually not yet started. The person may see shadows or other things that do not exist, but they are aware that they are not real. The prodromal phase is hard to identify. This phase can last for years and may never progress to a psychotic illness.

### **Symptoms of the prodromal phase include:**

- Cognitive decline (the brain is not functioning as well as usual)
- Spending much less time with family and friends.
- Receiving poor grades when grades used to be better.
- Performing poorly at work when performance used to be better.
- Avoiding doing activities that were once enjoyed.
- Avoiding bathing, grooming, and other personal care.

- Avoiding caring for personal living space.
- Seeming anxious, irritable or depressed.
- Having a hard time paying attention or remembering things.
- Thinking all the time about new, unusual ideas.
- Changing sleep patterns.
- Beginning to feel paranoia or having odd thought patterns

People experiencing these symptoms should see a primary care doctor or mental health professional as soon as possible. The prodromal phase usually lasts several months, but it can be longer or shorter. Family members often say that they can look back on their loved one's experiences and identify this phase. But at the time, it is often hard to see the difference between the normal struggles of being a teenager or young adult and the early warning signs that happen before psychosis. Phase two is called the acute phase. The person has clear psychotic symptoms such as hallucinations, delusions, and confused thinking in this stage.

Phase two is called the acute phase.

The person has clear psychotic symptoms such as hallucinations, delusions, and confused thinking in this stage. Family members may notice symptoms such as those listed above as well as:

- Depressed mood or anxiety.
- Reduced emotional expression.
- Problems handling everyday stress.
- Increased sensitivity to sights and sounds.
- Mistaking noises for voices.
- Unusual or overly intense new ideas or beliefs.
- Strange new emotions or seeming to have no emotions at all.
- Speech that does not make sense.
- Not recognizing the symptoms, they are experiencing.

This is called "lack of insight." This is usually when others notice the psychosis. The individual may not seek treatment because they do not realize there is a problem. Loved ones should help the young person get the treatment they need as soon as possible so they can recover sooner.

### **Types of psychosis:**

- Schizophrenia;
- Bipolar affective disorder;

- Delusions: paranoia, chronic hallucinatory psychosis, paraphrenia;
- epilepsy;
- Senile or pre-senile dementia, etc.

### **Causes of psychosis:**

We are still learning about how and why psychosis develops, but several factors are likely involved. We do know that teenagers and young adults are at increased risk of experiencing an episode of psychosis because of hormonal changes in their brain during puberty.

Several factors that can contribute to psychosis:

- **Genetics.** Many genes can contribute to the development of psychosis, but just because a person has a gene doesn't mean they will experience psychosis. Ongoing studies will help us better understand which genes play a role in psychosis.
- **Trauma.** A traumatic event such as a death, war or sexual assault can trigger a psychotic episode. The type of trauma—and a person's age—affects whether a traumatic event will result in psychosis.
- **Substance use.** The use of marijuana, LSD, amphetamines and other substances can increase the risk of psychosis in people who are already vulnerable.
- **Physical illness or injury.** Traumatic brain injuries, brain tumors, strokes, HIV and some brain diseases such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and dementia can sometimes cause psychosis.
- **Mental health conditions.** Sometimes psychosis is a symptom of a condition like schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, bipolar disorder or depression.

**Treatment of psychosis:** Treating psychosis may involve a combination of medications and therapy. Most people will experience an improvement in their symptoms with treatment.

**Rapid tranquilization:** Sometimes people experiencing psychosis can become agitated and be at risk of hurting themselves or others. In these cases, it may be necessary to calm them down quickly. This method is called rapid tranquilization. A doctor or emergency response personnel will administer a fast-acting injection or liquid medicine to quickly relax the patient.

**Medication:** Symptoms of psychosis can be controlled with medications called antipsychotics. They reduce hallucinations and delusions and help people think more clearly. The type of antipsychotic that is prescribed will depend on the symptoms. In many cases, people only need to take antipsychotics for a short time to get their symptoms under control. People with schizophrenia may have to stay on medications for life.

**Cognitive behavioural therapy:** Cognitive means meeting regularly to talk with a mental health counsellor with the goal of changing thinking and behaviours. This approach has been shown to be effective in helping people make permanent changes and better manage their illness. It's often most helpful for psychotic symptoms that don't completely resolve with medications.

These suggestions could help you cope with psychosis. You may choose to try them on their own or alongside treatment. This page covers:

- Peer support
- Recognising your triggers
- Learning to relax
- Looking after yourself
- Creating a crisis plan

**Peer support:**

Peer support brings together people who've had similar experiences to support each other. You could access peer support online or try a support group in your local area.

**Recognise your triggers:**

It might be helpful to keep a diary recording, for example:

- Life events
- Your mood
- Your diet
- Sleep

**Learn to relax:**

- Manage your stress. Our pages on managing stress can help you manage pressure and build resilience.
- Try some relaxation techniques. Relaxation can help you look after your wellbeing when you are feeling stressed, anxious or busy.

**Look after yourself:**

- Try to get enough sleep. Sleep can give you the energy to cope with difficult feelings and experiences.
- Think about your diet. Eating regularly and keeping your blood sugar stable can make a difference to your mood and energy levels.
- Try and take some exercise. Exercise can be really helpful for your mental wellbeing.

- Doing practical things like gardening, cooking or making things can help you feel more connected to the world around you. Being outside in green space can help you feel more in touch with your surroundings.