

Invited to Belong

Schizophrenia

Condition:

Schizophrenia is a complicated mental health condition related to psychosis. There are lots of misconceptions about it and even mental health professionals don't all agree about it. However, the reality is that about 1 in every 100 people get this diagnosis at some point in their lives.

Many experiences and behaviours can be part of schizophrenia. They can start suddenly, or they might develop gradually over time.

Problem Areas:

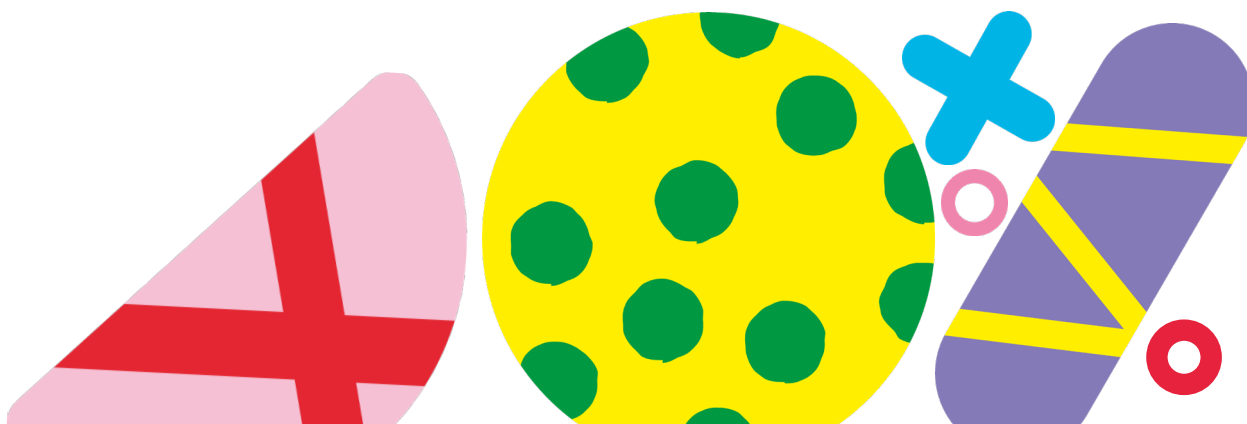
- Each person's experience is unique. A doctor might suggest someone has schizophrenia if they experience some of the following:
- a lack of interest in things
- feeling disconnected from their emotions
- difficulty concentrating
- wanting to avoid people
- hallucinations, such as hearing voices or seeing things that others don't
- delusions (strong beliefs that others don't share), including paranoid delusions
- disorganised thinking and speech
- not wanting to look after themselves

Other impacts of schizophrenia can include:

- being unable to carry on with day-to-day activities, like going to school, work, or groups, or taking care of themselves
- becoming upset, confused, or suspicious of other people or particular groups (like strangers, or people in authority)
- disagreeing with people who think something is wrong
- feeling worried or afraid of seeking help.

Support strategies for your Group:

There are lots of things that you can try if you have a young person in your group who has





schizophrenia.

- Ask how you can help. This might include everyday things, taking them to appointments, or reminding them to take their medication if they struggle to remember on their own.
- Focus on feelings, not experiences. You might feel unsure what to say or do when someone sees or believes something you don't - but it's important to remember that their experiences feel real to them. It can help if you focus on how they are feeling, rather than talking about what is real or true. Instead of denying their experience it can help to say something like "That sounds really frightening, who can we talk to about it?".
- Notice what's going well. It can be hard seeing someone close to you experience schizophrenia. They might find it hard to think clearly, have problems understanding what is real, stop taking care of themselves or avoid seeing people. Try to notice positive things too. It can help to set small, realistic goals to aim for rather than focusing on what they can't do. It's also important to remember that losing interest and motivation are part of having schizophrenia and not something the person is choosing to do.
- Find out more about schizophrenia; the Mind website below would be a great start. It could help to learn about the symptoms they might experience and the coping strategies they could find useful. You may find it helpful to speak to others in the same situation.
- Plan ahead for difficult times. When the young person is feeling well, it can be helpful to discuss with them and their family how you can help if a crisis happens, or if they are at the start of another episode. You could:
 - encourage them to write a crisis plan
 - discuss which symptoms you can look out for
 - get to know their triggers and plan how to cope with them

Further information:

Mind <https://www.mind.org.uk>

Thanks to Mind for much of the material used in writing this article.

'Invited to Belong' has been developed in partnership between Urban Saints and Youthscape.



Youthscape

www.urbansaints.org/invitedtobelong