

TITLE: MENTAL HEALTH: IT'S MEANING, WHY MENTAL HEALTH IS IMPORTANT, TYPES OF MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS, AND EFFECTIVE WAYS TO COPE WITH MENTAL HEALTH

By Victoria Agholo.



When Tolu started feeling overwhelmed by everyday tasks, she brushed it off as stress. But sleepless nights, constant worry, and isolation crept in. It wasn't until she reached out for help that she realized she was battling anxiety. Now, she's learning to live with peace and purpose through therapy, mindfulness, and community support.

As the world revolves, mental health is one of those topics we will need to give cognizance to. Stress, depression, and anxiety can affect mental health and may disrupt a person's routine. Although healthcare professionals often use the term "mental health," doctors recognize that many mental health conditions have physical roots.

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), “Mental Health is the state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well, work well, and contribute to their community. It has intrinsic and instrumental value and is integral to our well-being.”

WHY IS MENTAL HEALTH IMPORTANT?

Good mental health is foundational to living a balanced and fulfilling life. When our mental health is strong, we are more resilient in the face of challenges, more productive in our daily tasks, and better equipped to maintain positive relationships. Conversely, poor mental health can lead to a range of issues, including depression, anxiety, burnout, and even physical health problems like hypertension or chronic fatigue.

TYPES OF MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS

Healthcare professionals' group mental health disorders according to the features they have in common. They include:

- Anxiety Disorders
- Mood Disorders
- Schizophrenia Disorders

★ ANXIETY DISORDERS

According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, anxiety disorders are the most common mental health disorders. People with these conditions have severe fear or anxiety related to certain objects or situations. Most people with an anxiety disorder try to avoid exposure to whatever triggers their anxiety. Below are some examples of anxiety disorders:

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)



Generalized anxiety disorder involves excessive worry or fear that disrupts everyday living. People may also experience physical symptoms, including:

- Restlessness
- Fatigue
- Poor Concentration
- Tense Muscles
- Interrupted Sleep

Anxiety symptoms do not always have a specific trigger in people with GAD. They may experience excessive anxiety when encountering everyday situations that do not pose a direct danger, such as chores or appointments. A person with GAD may sometimes feel anxiety with no trigger at all.

Panic Disorder

People with panic disorder experience regular panic attacks involving sudden, overwhelming terror or a sense of imminent disaster and death.

Phobias

There are many types of phobias, and what may seem typical to one person might be a severe problem that dominates daily life for another. Different types include:

Simple phobias: These may involve a disproportionate fear of specific objects, scenarios, or animals. A fear of spiders is a typical example.

Social phobia: Sometimes known as social anxiety, this is a fear of being watched or judged by others. People with social phobia often restrict their exposure to social environments.

Agoraphobia: The term “agoraphobia” refers to a fear of situations where getting away may be difficult, such as being in an elevator or a moving train. People sometimes misunderstand this phobia as a fear of being outside.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder

People with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) may experience constant, stressful thoughts and an urge to perform repetitive acts, such as handwashing.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)



PTSD can occur after a person experiences or witnesses a stressful or traumatic event. During this type of event, the person thinks their life or other people’s lives are in danger. They may feel afraid or that they have no control over what is happening. These sensations of trauma and fear may then contribute to PTSD.

★ MOOD DISORDERS

People may also refer to mood disorders as affective disorders or depressive disorders. People with these conditions have significant mood changes, generally involving either mania, a period of high energy and joy, or depression.

Examples of mood disorders include:

Major Depression: An individual with major depression experiences a constant low mood and loses interest in activities and events that they previously enjoyed (anhedonia). They may feel prolonged periods of sadness or extreme sadness.

Bipolar Disorder: A person with bipolar disorder experiences unusual changes in their mood, energy levels, levels of activity, and ability to continue with daily life. Periods of high mood are known as manic phases, while depressive phases bring on low mood.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD): Reduced daylight during the fall, winter, and early spring months triggers SAD, a type of major depression.

★ SCHIZOPHRENIA DISORDERS

The term “schizophrenia” often refers to a spectrum of disorders characterized by features of psychosis and other severe symptoms. These are highly complex conditions. According to the NIMH, signs of schizophrenia typically develop between the ages of 16 and 30. A person will have thoughts that appear fragmented, and may also find it hard to process information.

Schizophrenia has negative and positive symptoms. Positive symptoms include hallucinations and delusions, while withdrawal and lack of motivation are examples of negative symptoms.

EFFECTIVE WAYS TO COPE WITH MENTAL HEALTH

To improve mental health, focus on self-care, build strong relationships, practice mindfulness, and seek professional help when needed.



Here are some suggestions:

Prioritize sleep

Exercise regularly

Practice mindfulness

Eat well

Connect with others

Focus on your strength

Set healthy boundaries

Spend time in nature

Learn from mistakes

Practice self-compassion

Be thankful

Seek help when needed

You're not alone. You don't have to go through it alone. Your mind matters.