

## **Common Symptoms and Triggers of Mental Illness**

**Symptoms:** Although symptoms may vary with each type of mental illness and each individual, the following are some common symptoms to watch for:

- Depression, lasting for longer than a few weeks
- Extreme fears or anxiety that seem "un-natural" for circumstances or events
- Lack of motivation for a prolonged period of time
- Persistent feelings of helplessness or hopelessness
- Loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed
- Extreme mood swings sometimes with overly reckless behavior
- Difficulty concentrating and/or sudden irritability patterns
- Disruption to usual sleep patterns
- Confused thoughts, delusions, and/or hallucinations
- Talk or thoughts of suicide

While some of these symptoms are uncomfortable or frightening to talk about, the sooner someone seeks help, the better the chances for evaluation and management of the illness. The Mental Health Center of Greater Manchester has trained professionals on staff to help in your time of need.

If you are concerned about yourself, a friend, family member or employee, we encourage you to contact MHCGM or the Crisis Intervention Hotline at:

**(603) 668-4111**

**A team is available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day**

**Triggers:** There is no single cause for mental illness, and no one is to blame when someone is experiencing a mental illness. Often, it's a complex interplay of many factors that contribute to a person becoming mentally ill. Mental illnesses can be triggered by:

- A chemical imbalance
- Genetics
- Psychological and social factors such as a traumatic life event

### **Chemical Imbalance**

A chemical imbalance in the brain can lead to symptoms such as depression, anxiety, or stress reactions. We are all at-risk for changes in our brains' chemistry. Recognizing these changes is an important part of treatment and the return to health.

### **Genetics**

Most mental illnesses are more common among close family members, which suggest that genetics play a role too. People, however, don't inherit the illness itself; they just inherit the tendency to get it.

### **Psychological and Social Factors**

Psychological and social factors are also major contributors to mental health, and negative experiences within family or social circles can have a huge impact on one's ability to cope. It is commonly thought that mental illness can be triggered by a traumatic life event or situation and/or prolonged stress. Some examples are as follows:

- Lack of support from relationships
- Child abuse and neglect
- Family violence
- Severe or prolonged stress
- Unemployment
- Major changes in life

A person's emotional health comes from a combination of their attitudes, personality, support systems, and brain chemistry. To keep our minds mentally well, a positive attitude with healthy lifestyle choices along with talking to trained professionals, will help one through many of life's difficulties.

A good support system of family and friends is also valuable during challenging times. But a mental illness can affect even the most upbeat, "can-do," well-adjusted person, just as a physical illness can.

While some of these symptoms are uncomfortable or frightening to talk about, the sooner someone seeks help, the better they will be prepared to manage a mental illness.

For general information, referrals, or for the 24-hour Crisis, Distress & Suicide Prevention line - **Call # (603) 668-4111**