

In the Know

The Inservice Club for Nursing Assistants

Instructions for the Learner

We hope you enjoy this Inservice, “**Working With Mentally Ill Clients**”. It’s been prepared especially for nursing assistants like you. You work very hard, and we appreciate the effort you make to complete these educational materials. It shows your desire to continue learning and growing in your profession.

What will you learn?

After finishing this inservice, you will be able to:

- State the definition of mental illness.
- Discuss the truth behind at least four common myths about mental illness.
- Describe the three main types of mental illness.
- Discuss how you can help your clients manage the symptoms of mental illness.
- Demonstrate in your daily work how you can help your mentally ill clients.

If you are studying the inservice on your own, please do the following:

- Read through **all** the material. You may find it useful to have a highlighting marker nearby as you read. Highlight any information that is new to you or that you feel is especially important.
- If you have questions about anything you read, please ask _____.
- Take the quiz. Think about each statement and pick the best answer.
- Check with your supervisor for the right answers. You need **8 correct** to pass!
- Print your name, write in the date, and then sign your name.
- Keep the inservice information for yourself and turn in the quiz page to

_____ no later than _____. Show your
Inservice Club Membership Card to _____ so that it can be
initialed.

THANK YOU!



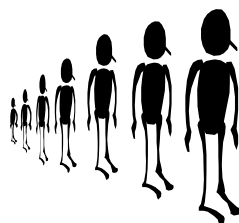


In the Know

The Inservice Club for Nursing Assistants

What Is Mental Illness?

Imagine going through life feeling like no one understands you—and like you don't even understand yourself. Over the years, family members have said that you're "crazy", "loony", "batty" and "mad as a hatter". Some people in town call you "nuts", "schizo", and "screwy". They cross to the other side of the street when they see you coming.



You'd give anything to have an "acceptable" illness...like diabetes. Instead, you have a *mental illness*. You feel alone and scared...and

you wonder how you can get through the rest of your life. *This is only one small example of the problems faced by people who are mentally ill.*



You're afraid to talk about the weeks you've spent in the hospital. People might think you've truly "lost your marbles" or tease you for being in the "loony bin", the "funny farm" or the "nuthouse".

You've worked so hard to get better. You take three different medications every day to keep your symptoms under control—even though sometimes the medications make you feel worse.

For a while, you had a full-time job at a daycare center. But, you got fired because some of the parents found out about your illness.

A mental illness is a disease of the brain that affects the way a person *thinks, acts and feels*. Many mental illnesses have a physical cause—just like cancer or diabetes. But, mental disorders can also be caused by a person's life experiences or environment.

Mental illness can strike anyone at any age. *Think of it like this:* Anyone with a heart can get heart disease... and anyone with a brain can get a mental disorder. Mental illnesses are more common than cancer, diabetes and heart disease!

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306 Brandermill Drive
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www.knowingmore.com

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Special points of interest:

- See page 5 for the warning signs of mental illness and for information about treating mental illnesses.
- See page 9 to read about famous people with mental illnesses.
- See page 12 for questions and answers about mental illness.



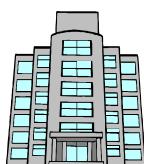
Almost everyone with a mental illness can be helped to enjoy a better quality of life!
You can make a real difference in the lives of your clients!

The History of Mental Illness in America



- In the United States, the first asylum for the mentally ill opened in 1769 in Williamsburg, Virginia. There weren't many facilities back then that cared for mentally ill people, so most of them were homeless or in jail.
- Beginning in the 1830's, a number of institutions were built for helpless and homeless people. These facilities housed poor people, mentally ill people and orphans—all in the same place. Many of the residents died from abuse or contagious diseases.

- In the late 1800's, the government decided that it would be better if mentally ill people lived in their own special hospitals.



- By 1950, most mentally ill Americans lived in state hospitals. Their families were asked not to visit. It was believed that mentally ill people were too delicate to survive normal family life.
- At the same time, psychiatrists came up with a new theory about the *cause* of mental illness.



They announced that family members—*especially mothers*—were to blame. Doctors decided that mentally ill people shouldn't live at home since their mothers were the cause of their mental problems.

- In 1963, President Kennedy introduced the Community Mental Health Act. This law spelled out a plan to get rid of "mental hospitals" by offering community housing to the mentally ill. It was believed that mentally ill people would benefit by living in group homes. In this way, they would still be supervised, but they wouldn't be so isolated from the rest of the world. (And, they wouldn't be living with the families that had made them sick in the first place.) Unfortunately, this plan didn't work.

- What was the problem with the Community Mental Health Act? There weren't enough community homes where the mentally ill could live. Many "normal" people—who weren't educated about mental illness—objected to having group homes in their neighborhoods. So, when the state hospitals closed down, many mentally ill people ended up returning to their families. Others became homeless.



- Families of the mentally ill were put in a tough spot. First, they were told that their loved one's mental illness was their fault. Then, they were asked to provide loving care for their sick relative. Families received very little support from either the government or the community.
- In 1979, the **National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI)** was created by—and for—family members. This organization collected new evidence showing that mental illness was not caused by "bad mothers". NAMI continues to work today to educate the public about mental illness and to support mentally ill people and their families.
- Today, about 90% of the people who would have lived in mental hospitals in 1950 are not in the hospital. Yet, the funding for group homes has been cut again and again, forcing many of them to close down. So where are the mentally ill? Many live with their families or in treatment centers. Others live on their own, in jail or on the streets.



"When you're mentally ill, you're living in the darkest, most horrible place...and you're living there alone."

Interesting Facts...



- There are over one hundred billion nerve cells in the brain. To communicate with each other, these nerve cells need more than one hundred chemicals.



- These chemicals help the brain cells make one trillion different connections! Without these connections, our brains can't work properly.
- More than 6 million Americans suffer from a serious mental illness every year. During a lifetime, nearly *half* of all Americans will have at least one mental disorder.
- Twice as many women as men suffer from depression. But, women are more likely to seek help. Men commit suicide four times as often as women.

- People suffering from mental illnesses take up more hospital beds than all the people with cancer, diabetes, arthritis and heart disease combined. *(At any one time, almost 21% of all hospital beds are filled by the mentally ill.)*



- The majority of people with mental illnesses are capable of living normal lives.
- Scientists believe that 90% of the people who have a mental illness can be helped with new therapies. But, only one third of them ever receive treatment!



- Mental illnesses cost our country over \$75 billion every year—which is just as much as the cost of heart disease.



The month of May is National Mental Health Month.

- Nearly 8% of prisoners in the U.S. suffer from severe mental disorders.

If you need more information about mental illness, try calling the special HOTLINE at the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill:
(It's a free call!)

1-800-346-2742

Or check out their website at:

www.nami.org

- Even though most people with mental illnesses would be capable of working if they received proper treatment, 80% of them are unemployed.

- Depression in the elderly is a serious problem. It can lead to a higher risk for heart attacks, strokes, hip fractures and severe infections. However, most depressed seniors get no help for their depression.



- One third of homeless adults suffer from a severe mental illness. Their illness is often combined with alcohol or drug abuse.

- Surveys have shown that nearly half of all Americans believe that mentally ill people are violent.

- Suicide is the ninth leading cause of death in the United States...and people with mental illnesses are *twelve times more likely* to kill themselves.

- For every 100 people who have a relapse of their mental illness, 40 of them get sick again because they *stopped* taking their medication.

- The success rate for treating major mental illnesses (*averaging 68%*) is much better than the success rate for treating heart disease (*only 52%*).



Common Myths About Mental Illness

Myth: People who act mentally ill could “snap out of it” if they really wanted to.



Truth: It’s sad, but about half of all Americans believe this to be true. *It’s not!* Mental illness can be a severe, chronic, debilitating illness. It’s just as real as cancer or a stroke. You wouldn’t tell someone with cancer to just “snap out of it”. People with mental illnesses deserve the same respect.

Myth: All mental illnesses are caused by childhood trauma.

Truth: Yes, it’s possible for mental illness to be brought on by some terrible childhood experience. However, trauma is not the *only* cause of mental illness. Scientists believe that many mental illnesses are the result of a chemical imbalance in the brain. Remember...the brain needs over 100 different chemicals to work right. If it doesn’t get enough of a certain chemical, a mental illness may develop.

Myth: People who are mentally ill are dangerous.



Truth: There are some mentally ill people who commit crimes...even violent crimes like rape and murder. However, most mental illnesses cause people to become more *passive* instead of more aggressive. And studies have shown that the mentally ill are more likely to be the *victims* of a crime—rather than the people committing the crimes. They are also *2000 times more likely* to hurt themselves than someone else.

Myth: Children don’t suffer from mental illnesses.

Truth: This is completely false. Studies have shown that *at least* six million young people in America suffer from a mental disorder that’s severe enough to disrupt their lives at school or at home.

Myth: People with mental illnesses shouldn’t be allowed to work...at least not at a job that has a lot of responsibility.

Truth: Some mentally ill people are too sick to work. But most of them have the ability to work at any job for which they have talent or training.

NOTE: Most mental illnesses are *temporary* conditions from which people recover. However, it’s common for serious mental illnesses to begin when people are teenagers or young adults, interrupting their education and/or job training. When they recover, they may need help finishing their education or learning specific job skills.

The Stigma of Mental Illness

(Stigma = Mark of shame)

- In ancient Greece, people with mental illnesses were shunned, locked up or even put to death. 
- In the 1600’s, the mentally ill were accused of being possessed by the devil. They were chained, humiliated and abused—as punishment for being evil.
- In the 1800’s, a Philadelphia mental hospital was open to the public on weekends. Anyone could pay a fee to see the “lunatics”. People considered this entertainment...like going to the movies.
- In 1972, the Democratic nominee for Vice President of the United States had to step down because the press found out he’d suffered from depression in the past. 
- Moviemakers in Hollywood add to the stigma of mental illness. Think of movies like “Halloween” and “Psycho”. The bad guys are “mental patients” who have become dangerous killers. This Hollywood image supports the myth that we should be *afraid* of mentally ill people.



Warning Signs of Mental Illness

Every day, people deal with serious problems in their lives, some of which cause temporary mental disorders. So, how do you know if someone is going just through a personal crisis or if that person has a serious mental illness? You don't. That's for a doctor to decide. However, there are some *warning signs* that you can watch for, including:

- A noticeable change in personality.
- A change in cleanliness—*not wanting to bathe, fix their hair or wear clean clothes.*
- A change in sleeping patterns—*either too much or too little.*
- Episodes of confused thinking.
- Long lasting severe depression.
- Intense “highs” and “lows”.
- Alcohol or drug abuse.
- A constant desire to be alone.
- Talking about suicide.

- Extreme anger for no reason.
- Episodes of delusions, hallucinations and hearing voices.



There are other conditions that can seem like mental illness. These include:

- An emotional reaction to a life crisis...such as the loss of a loved one.
- A physical illness...such as diabetes that's out of control.
- A side effect to a medication.

It's good to know that your client's behavior may not be caused by a mental illness. But, don't try to figure this out for yourself. Report any changes in your client's condition or behavior right away.

Treatments For Mental Illnesses

Medication

- Certain medications help balance the brain's chemicals. When the chemicals are in balance, the symptoms of mental illness can be reduced or eliminated.
- There are a number of different drugs used to treat mental illnesses. Each person may have to try a few different medications before doctors know which one works best for that individual.
- You might have clients who take these common medications: Thorazine, Haldol, Prozac, Lithium, Valium and Halcion.
- The side effects of medications can be very unpleasant, including: drowsiness, dizziness, dry mouth, constipation, nausea, vomiting, weight gain, severe muscle stiffness, blurred vision, drooling, loss of appetite, and restlessness. These side effects are usually temporary.

Other Treatments

- Talk therapy is an important part of treating a mental illness. It focuses on how to solve practical, day-to-day problems so that a mentally ill person can have the most satisfying life possible.
- Electro convulsive therapy (or ECT) is often called “shock treatment”. With modern equipment, it's not the horrible “torture” that you may have seen performed in old movies. ECT may be effective for some people with severe depression.

Community Support:

- As people recover from a mental illness, they may need help with housing, education, and job training. They also benefit from ongoing counseling and support groups.



Basic Information About Mood Disorders



"I am now the most miserable man living... I must die or be better."

Abraham Lincoln
(U. S. President who suffered from clinical depression)

- **Mood disorders are a group of illnesses that include:**

- **Major Depression.** This disorder is also called "clinical depression". This disorder causes severe sadness and despair—far beyond the "down" moods we all have from time to time.
- **Mania.** People who suffer from mania are very excitable and overly active. They also tend to believe that they can do anything and never get hurt—like walking in front of traffic.
- **Bipolar Disorder.** This mood disorder includes both depression and mania. People who have bipolar disorder experience extreme "highs" and intense "lows". (They also have periods of time when their moods are relatively normal.)



- **The symptoms of depression include:**

- **Mood Changes:** Feeling sad and miserable most of the time. Having no interest in life. Being irritable and very emotional.
- **Energy Level Changes.** Feeling exhausted. Wanting to sleep all the time. Sometimes having trouble getting to sleep. Losing or gaining weight.
- **Thought Changes.** Having lots of negative thoughts. Being unable to concentrate or make a decision. Thinking that the future is hopeless and that suicide is the solution.
- **Behavior Changes.** Forgetting to eat. Moving very slowly. Avoiding friends and family. Having trouble getting anything done. Being restless or jittery. Needing help even with easy tasks.

- **The symptoms of mania include:**

- **Mood Changes.** Feeling powerful and excited. Being in a good mood—even during a tragedy. Getting impatient or agitated if they can't do what they want.
- **Energy Level Changes.** Feeling full of energy. Going for days without sleep—without feeling tired.
- **Thought Changes.** Talking too fast, too loud and without stopping. Racing from one idea to the next. Making fast decisions that are regretted later (*such as using a credit card to buy a \$1,000.00 dress*).
- **Behavior Changes.** Moving too fast. Beginning a lot of projects at once—but never finishing any of them. Acting "sexy" when it's not appropriate. Breaking laws without realizing it.

Things to Remember about Mood Disorders

- People with severe depression or bipolar disease have a high risk of suicide. If you suspect your client is thinking about suicide, report it immediately! (*It's better to report it—even if you're wrong—than to ignore the situation.*)
- For people with bipolar disease, manic episodes are almost always followed by a deep depression. Sometimes there can be months of normal mood, but when the illness is severe, people tend to go continually from high to low to high...and so on.
- It's common for people to be "moody" or depressed—even for long periods of time—when they are going through a stressful experience. This doesn't mean that they have a mood disorder. (*That's up to a doctor to decide.*) However, you should always tell your supervisor if you notice a change in your client's mood or behavior.



Basic Information About Schizophrenia



"I could not leave my house...because all my silent thoughts were somehow being picked up and read."

A man with schizophrenia

- **Schizophrenia is the most complex mental illness:**

- Schizophrenia produces delusions, hallucinations and confused thinking. It can have a devastating effect on someone's life.
- The word "schizophrenia" comes from a Greek word that means "splitting of the mind". This does not mean that people with schizophrenia have "split personalities". It means that they experience a split between what's happening *inside their heads* and what's really happening *in the outside world*.
- Males and females develop schizophrenia in equal numbers. Usually, the illness begin in the late teens or early twenties. After age 40, half of all people with schizophrenia get a little better. No one knows why.

- **The symptoms of schizophrenia include:**

- **Delusions.** A delusion is a false belief. People with schizophrenia may be convinced that someone is trying to kill them or they may believe that they are an angel sent from God.
- **Hallucinations.** When people see, hear, feel, smell or taste something that isn't really there, they are having an hallucination. Hearing voices is the most common hallucination for people with schizophrenia.
- **Confused Thinking & Disorganized Speech.** People with schizophrenia tend to have problems thinking and speaking clearly. They may jump rapidly from one topic to another. For example, they may answer your question—but their answer has nothing to do

with the question you asked. Let's say that you ask, "Can I help you get dressed?" And your client might answer, "The President isn't at the White House today." (The words themselves make sense, but not as an answer to your question.) Sometimes, the disorganized speech gets so bad that no one can understand it.

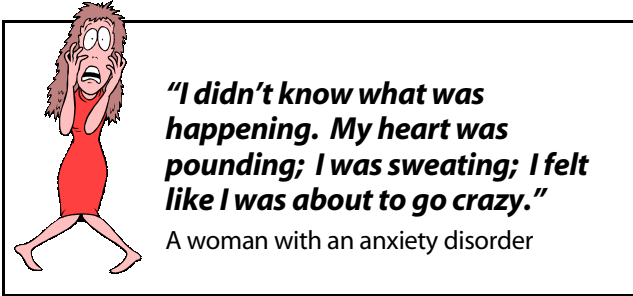
- **Inappropriate Affect.** When someone has an inappropriate affect, it means that her appearance and behaviors don't match her speech. For example, a person with schizophrenia may laugh and smile as she tells you about a loved one's death.

Things to Remember about Schizophrenia

- Schizophrenia is a serious illness, but it's not hopeless. For every 100 people with schizophrenia, 25 recover completely. 50 improve with treatment. And only 25 stay the same or get worse.
- Please remember that hallucinations seem completely real to the person having them. And, they are often terrifying experiences. Don't make fun of people who are having hallucinations. And, don't brush them off as "fake". Do what you can to help the person feel safe and protected.
- People who are delusional will not change their beliefs just because you say they are false. For example, let's say your client believes he is Jesus Christ. You can't change his mind just by telling him that his name is really John Jones. His delusion is too strong.
- When your client is speaking in a disorganized way, don't feel bad if you can't make sense of it. The best thing to do is to listen for the emotions behind the words. For example, listen to your client's tone of voice. Does he or she seem happy? Then you might say, "You seem to be feeling good today. I'm really glad about that."



Basic Information About Anxiety Disorders



- **Anxiety disorders are a group of illnesses including:**

- **Phobias.** When people get anxious because of a strong, inappropriate fear of some ordinary event or thing, they are said to have a "phobia". For example, "*agoraphobia*" is the fear of open spaces. People with this disorder are often afraid to leave their homes. Actress Kim Basinger was "paralyzed" for several years by agoraphobia, but has since recovered. Common phobias are a fear of heights, of spiders and of flying.



- **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.** People with this anxiety disorder are bothered by frequent unwanted thoughts. They also feel the need to complete the same ritual over and over. For example, a person with OCD may have an intense fear of germs. Thinking about this fear takes up a lot of his time. To try to deal with it, he washes his hands...over and over and over. The character played by Jack Nicholson in the movie "As Good As It Gets" has OCD.



- **Panic Disorder.** This illness causes "panic attacks" during which people tremble, have shortness of breath and feel *terrified*. These attacks occur suddenly—often with no apparent cause. They make people believe that they are dying or having a heart attack. It's common for someone having a panic attack to end up in the emergency room.



- **The symptoms of anxiety disorders include:**

- Dizziness, sweating, hot and cold flashes.
- Shakiness, trembling and feeling faint.
- Nausea.
- Tightness in the chest, racing or pounding heartbeat.
- Shortness of breath or feeling choked.
- Terror! The sense that something horrible is about to happen.
- Fear of dying.
- A feeling that the whole experience is unreal.
- Obsessive thoughts. (*For example, a person may believe that "stepping on a crack will break your mother's back". This causes him to think constantly about avoiding cracks as he walks.*)
- Compulsive behaviors. (*For example, a person may be afraid of being robbed, so he feels compelled to check the door locks over and over and over.*)

Things to Remember about Anxiety Disorders



- For years, people with anxiety disorders were dismissed by doctors as just being "high-strung" or "nervous". Many were ignored by doctors who said, "*It's all in your head.*" Yet the fears were very real to the people experiencing them!
- Now, doctors know that anxiety disorders respond very well to treatment. Studies have shown that up to 90% of these illnesses can be successfully treated—so that people can take control of their lives, rather than being controlled by a mental disorder.
- If you notice signs of an anxiety disorder in your clients, tell your supervisor right away so your clients can get the help they need.

Famous People With Mental Illnesses

- **John Nash** has lived with schizophrenia for over thirty years. For many years, he suffered from severe delusions and hallucinations. However, Mr. Nash hasn't let his illness stop him from accomplishing important work. He won the Nobel Prize for his mathematical theories.



- **Judy Garland** will be a legend forever for her work in the "Wizard of Oz". However, she dealt with depression for most of her life. This may have caused her fatal addiction to drugs and alcohol.
- **Isaac Newton** suffered from manic depression—but he managed to discover gravity anyway!
- **Vivien Leigh** became world famous by playing Scarlet O'Hara in the movie "Gone with the Wind". Yet, she lived with mental illness most of her adult life. Her illness was not diagnosed until she was in her forties—even though it disrupted both her marriage and her career.



- **John Denver** always seemed so happy singing about the Rocky Mountains, but he lived with clinical depression for years.



- **Abraham Lincoln** is considered one of the greatest U. S. Presidents ever. However, he suffered from severe episodes of depression—and even thought about committing suicide. (In today's world, his illness would probably keep him from being elected President!)
- **Ludwig van Beethoven** was a brilliant composer of classical music. Along with being deaf, he also had to deal with bipolar disorder.
- **Marilyn Monroe** grew up with a schizophrenic mother. Her mother had regular psychotic episodes throughout Marilyn's childhood. As an adult, Marilyn suffered from depression.
- **Ernest Hemingway** wrote Pulitzer Prize-winning novels, but his years of depression led him to commit suicide. Other members of his family have also committed suicide.



In Their Own Words...

"I want to die. I don't want to move. I want to be left alone. To disappear. Not to be bothered with washing, shaving, talking, walking, going to the bathroom. If only I could get out of this tunnel, this heavy darkness that is constantly pressing against my brain."

A man with clinical depression

"One day, after thirty hours of constant talking and hallucinating and running out the door, my son grabbed an ax and began destroying his room. He heard voices in the wall and wanted to find where they came from."

The father of a teenager with schizophrenia

"Even in my dreams they don't leave me alone. The voices keep saying, 'mental torture, mental torture.' It takes so much energy, so much courage to fight them. It's so tiring. They fill up my whole day."

A teenager with schizophrenia

"I found ways to hide my illness because I was afraid. You hear the news stories that people who have mental illness are always violent. You hear the jokes that they're always stupid. I was very afraid of what people would say about me."

A young woman with bipolar disorder



Tips For Working With the Mentally Ill



Studies have shown that one out of every four Americans is suffering from some type of mental illness. Think of your three best friends. If they're okay, then it's you.



Does this "joke" make you chuckle?

Well...it wouldn't be so funny if you or your loved one really did suffer from a mental illness. The effects of mental illness are no laughing matter! Your mentally ill clients are living with a heavy burden. By following these tips, you may be able to help lighten it.

- Remember that no matter how sick they are, most of your clients know that something is wrong. They may ask you if they are mentally ill. Don't lie to them, but check with your supervisor if you aren't sure what to say.



- If clients ask you if (*or when*) they will get better, be honest. Tell them you don't know but that you and your coworkers are doing everything you can to help.

- Remember that strange behavior is part of most mental illnesses. Don't take it personally—even when some of your client's negative thoughts seem to be directed at you.

- Work on one issue at a time with your clients. For example, let's say that Jim is a messy eater, wants to wear his pajamas all day and hates to take a bath. You probably won't get anywhere if you ask him to "fix" all three behaviors at once. Instead, tackle one thing at a time—bath time, for example. And, give lots of praise when Jim makes progress. (Be sure to discuss your plan with your coworkers so you can all work together.)



- Keep your sense of humor—so that you don't get stressed out. But be careful! Your mentally ill clients may not "get" your jokes or be able to tell when you are just teasing.

- Remember...if you do too much for your clients, they may come to feel helpless and useless. If you do too little for them, they may get "stressed out". Try to find the right balance, but keep in mind that each client is an individual. What works with one client may not work with another.

- Pay attention to the things that seem to bother your client—and then help them avoid those things, if possible. For example, if Mr. Arnold gets upset in a room full of people, help him avoid crowds.



- Be sensitive and understanding to how family members feel. They may have many mixed emotions about their loved one's illness including sadness, anger, shame, confusion, shock, resentment, frustration, guilt and fear. All of these feelings are normal.

- Be as consistent as you can. Many mentally ill people feel "safer" when there are no surprises in their lives. They like to have things go according to schedule. So, if you tell them that you'll help them with their lunch at 12:00, make sure you are there on time.



- Often, people with mental illnesses have low opinions of themselves—especially since they tend to focus on *negative* thoughts. It's important to give encouragement and praise whenever you notice them taking positive steps toward getting better. Even a small step—*like remembering to brush their teeth*—is deserving of praise. Just make sure that your praise is sincere. Don't talk to adult clients as if they were children.

- Remember that your clients may be hearing strange voices, seeing bizarre things or having scary thoughts. If you speak to them in a loud or upset voice, it might make matters worse. Try talking in short, simple sentences, using a calm voice.

More Tips For Working With the Mentally Ill

- Encourage your clients to take their medications as ordered. If you notice that your clients *aren't* taking their medications, tell your supervisor right away. You can also:
 - Try to find out *why* they aren't taking their meds. Share this information with your coworkers.
 - Remind your clients of something in their lives that's better since they started taking the medication.
 - If they don't want to take a medication because of the side effects, be sure to tell your supervisor that the drug is bothering your client. The doctor may be able to adjust the dose or give a different medication.
- Paranoia is a common fear among the mentally ill. People who are paranoid are afraid that someone or something is after them or wants to hurt them. For example, let's say that Mary tells you her neighbor is trying to kill her. To keep Mary from being so afraid, you might try:
 - Standing *next to* Mary—instead of facing her. (This might help Mary feel that you are *with* her...not against her.)
 - Not looking straight into her eyes. (Making direct eye contact may seem like a threat to Mary.)

Time to Lighten Up!

Don't you think the English language is confusing? Just think about the five sentences below. In each one, you'll see what looks like the same word twice—but each time, the word has its own meaning and is pronounced differently! It's enough to make you tear out your hair...



1. The bandage was *wound* around the *wound*.
2. He didn't *object* to the *object*.
3. The insurance was *invalid* for the *invalid*.
4. They were too *close* to the door to *close* it.
5. After a *number* of injections, my jaw got *number*.

When to Call For Help

Remember that most mentally ill people are not violent. However, there may be times when a client becomes upset or loses control and you feel that your own safety is threatened. If this happens, you should:

- Stay calm.
 - Protect yourself. (If necessary, put some distance between yourself and the client and make sure you have a way out of the room.)
 - Call for help according to your workplace policy. (If you work in home care, this might mean calling 911.)
- If your client expresses anger, try to remember that *fear* and *hurt* are usually the cause of angry feelings. Remain calm—*don't argue!* It's probably best not to touch or stare at the client and make sure he or she has room to move around. (Don't "crowd" an upset client.)
 - Some people with mental illnesses have trouble sitting still. It may be the disease—or it may be their medication—that is making them restless. If you work with clients who are restless, encourage them to get some exercise. Perhaps you can take a walk or do some jumping jacks together. (If this is a new symptom or if it's getting worse, be sure to report it. The client's doctor may be able to help.)
 - If your client behaves inappropriately, try to find a polite—but clear—way of talking about it. For example, you find Mr. Brown walking around naked. You might feel like yelling, "Go put some clothes on! You know better than to run around like that!" However, a better approach might be to say, "Some people get upset by naked bodies, so please get dressed." (This puts the "blame" on other people, not on Mr. Brown.)
 - Separate the person from the illness. You may not always respect your client's *behavior*, but you should always maintain respect for your client.



Questions & Answers About Mental Illness

Q: What are some ways to get rid of the stigma regarding mental illness?



A: It's up to all of us to work to get rid of this stigma. You might try the following:

- Talk to your friends and family about mental illness. If they believe any of the common myths about mental illness, you might change their minds by telling them the truth.
- Treat your clients as people first. For example, instead of saying, "One of my clients is a schizophrenic", try saying, "I give care to a person with schizophrenia."
- Don't use words like "crazy", "nuts" or "cracked" to describe your clients. And try to stop others from using this kind of hurtful language.
- Be open about any personal experiences you might have had with mental illness—either a loved one's illness or your own.

Q: Are there any factors that put a person at risk for developing a mental illness?

A: No one knows for sure what causes most mental illnesses, but we do know some of the factors that put a person at risk. These include:

- A family history of mental illness.
- Being born too small or too early.
- Exposure to toxic chemicals during childhood.
- Early drug use.
- Malnutrition.
- Having a chronic disease such as diabetes, asthma, cystic fibrosis, epilepsy or AIDS.
- Being blind or deaf.
- Living in extreme poverty.
- Living through a traumatic event.
- Being abused or neglected as a child.
- Living in a dysfunctional family.

Q: What are some other common mental illnesses?

A: There are many common mental illnesses including:

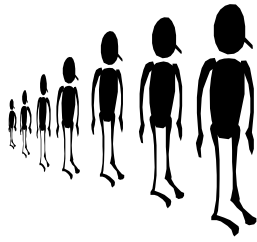
- Autism. This severe disorder causes people to have problems communicating and relating to others. It is a lifelong illness that begins in childhood. Dustin Hoffman played an adult with autism in "Rainman".
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. After experiencing a severe shock, some people have flashbacks, nightmares and other after effects. An example of PTSD is a soldier who relives the horrors of battle—even years after the war is over.
- Seasonal Affective Disorder. This illness is also called "*winter depression*" because people experience this depression during the months when there is less daylight.

Q: How do people in other cultures react to mental illness?

A: Different cultures treat people with mental illnesses according to their own beliefs. For example:

- African Americans tend to be ashamed of mental illness, believing that a person of character should be able to "snap out of it"—*without any medical help*. It used to be rare for a black man to commit suicide. Unfortunately, studies show suicide is rising at an alarming rate for young African American males.
- Studies have also shown that 25% of Hispanic high school girls have made *specific plans* for how to commit suicide. Why? Immigrant children have a high rate of mental illness...and many Hispanic children have no way to get medical help for their problems.
- Among Asians, having a mentally ill relative can affect a family's social status—so they may try to hide the problem.





In the Know

The Inservice Club for Nursing Assistants

Are You “In the Know” About Mental Illness?

Circle the best choice, or fill in your answer. Then check your answers with you supervisor!



1. TRUE or FALSE

Most mentally ill people could get better without medications if they tried.

2. TRUE or FALSE

If your client is paranoid, he may worry that strangers are following him.

3. TRUE or FALSE

Most mentally ill people are not violent.

4. TRUE or FALSE

Mental illnesses are rare, especially among elderly people.

5. Which of the following could be a warning sign of mental illness?

- A. Talking on the phone for hours.
- B. Crying while watching a sad movie.
- C. Wanting to be alone all the time.
- D. Forgetting people's names.

6. People with bipolar disease:

- A. Feel sad and miserable all the time.
- B. Have a high risk of suicide.
- C. Are unable to hold down a job.
- D. Inherited the illness from their mothers.

7. People with schizophrenia may have a strong (but false) belief called a _____.

8. If your client is having an hallucination, you should:

- A. Call the police.
- B. Try to change the subject by telling a joke.
- C. Make the client lie down in bed.
- D. Try to make the client feel safe and protected.

9. TRUE or FALSE

If your client gets sweaty, shaky and nauseated whenever she sees a dog, she might have an anxiety disorder.

10. The medications prescribed for mentally ill people may have unpleasant _____.

EMPLOYEE NAME _____

DATE _____

I understand the information presented in this inservice. I have completed this inservice and answered at least eight of the test questions correctly.

Employee Signature _____

Inservice Credit: 1 hour

Supervisor Signature _____

Self Study _____

File completed test in employee's personnel file.

Group Study _____