

Common Mental Health Issues

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[0 : 0 0] Okay, so welcome to our mental health event. Our topic today is common mental health issues, causes, symptoms, and barriers to treatment.

! So our goal is to give an overview of common mental health issues like anxiety, depression, ADHD, and trauma. So we'll be covering the causes, the symptoms, and some of the barriers to treatment.

So this topic may be triggering or confronting. So feel free to take a break, disengage, and look after yourself.

And looking after yourself may look like maybe just getting out of the room, get some fresh air, or just take a deep breath to calm yourself down. Okay, so mental health is a reality in New Zealand, as you can see from the statistics on the screen. Mental health challenges do not discriminate.

Anyone can, you know, be affected by those mental health disorders. In 2021, between 2021 and 2023, about one in three adults, which is 34.8% of New Zealanders, reported experiencing mild or greater anxiety or depression symptoms.

[1 : 3 1] And over half of all New Zealanders aged 15 to 24 experience anxiety or depression. So that's a huge number.

So the first mental health issue we are going to focus on is anxiety. So what is anxiety? Anxiety is a physical and mental reaction to perceived threat.

In small doses, anxiety is helpful. It protects us from danger and focuses our attention on problems. But when anxiety is too severe or occurs too frequently, it can be debilitating.

So there are three types of anxiety we are going to talk about. Generalized anxiety, phobias and panic. So generalized anxiety is an excessive amount of anxiety or worry in several areas of life, such as job responsibilities, health, finances, or even minor concerns like completing household chores.

Phobias is a very intense fear of specific situation or an object, which is out of proportion to its actual threat.

[2 : 5 8] For example, a fear of giving speeches or a fear of spiders could be considered a phobia. And then panic. An extreme anxious response where a person experiences a panic attack.

During a panic attack, the individual experiences numerous physical symptoms and is overwhelmed by a feeling of fear.

So what are the symptoms of anxiety? So uncontrollable worry, poor concentration, excessive nervousness, increased heart rate, sleep problems, upset stomach, muscle tension, avoidance of fear.

And avoidance can even heighten the anxiety, perpetuate the anxiety cycle because you are uncomfortable or you fear something, then you keep avoiding it.

So that increases the anxiety. So what causes anxiety? There are a number of factors that cause anxiety.

- [4 : 06] So we have biological factors, environmental factors, substance use and medication and even societal and lifestyle factors. So the biological factors include genetics.
- Anxiety is hereditary. You are more likely to develop anxiety if you have a first degree relative, maybe a biological parent or sibling with an anxiety disorder.
- Chemical imbalances. Imbalance in certain chemicals can contribute to an anxiety disorder. For example, serotonin, dopamine and others.
- And brain changes. There is a part of our brain called the amygdala that plays an important role in managing fear and anxiety. According to researchers, people with anxiety disorders show increased amygdala activity in response to anxiety cues.
- Medical conditions. Medical conditions. Certain health issues can be linked to anxiety. For example, heart conditions, chronic pain, respiratory disorders.
- [5 : 17] Environmental factors include stressful life events. Major life changes such as job loss, death of a loved one, divorce can also trigger anxiety.
- Even significant events like having a baby or getting married can also trigger anxiety.
- Trauma. Experiencing childhood abuse or traumatic events in adult life can be a significant trigger of anxiety as well.
- Substance use and medication. Recreational drugs, alcohol, caffeine and even prescription medication can contribute to anxiety or withdrawal symptoms.
- Medication side effects. Medication side effects. Some medications can cause anxiety as a side effect. Societal and lifestyle factors. Social media.
- Excessive and uncontrolled use of social media is being investigated as a factor that can trigger anxiety. And personality traits. Personality traits.
- [6 : 30] Certain personality traits such as shyness or being withdrawn can cause the risk of anxiety disorders. Depression.
- What is depression? Depression is a mental health problem that can affect how you feel and behave for weeks, months or years at a time.
- It is one of the most common mental health disorders characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, emptiness, a lack of motivation or interest in activities.
- It can also cause difficulties in thinking, memory and sleeping. The types of depression.
- The type of depression is a major depressive disorder or clinical depression is a period of low mood or loss of interest in activities nearly every day that lasts for at least two weeks.
- [7 : 40] Seasonal affective disorder, also known as SAD, is a type of depression that occurs during certain times of the year.
- Persistent depressive disorder is a chronic state of low depression that lasts for at least two years. Postpartum depression or postnatal depression.
- This is a type of depression experienced by women after giving birth and includes feelings of sadness, exhaustion and anxiety.
- So what are the symptoms of depression? For one to be diagnosed with depression, the symptoms must be significant and causing a significant distress and may be lasting for at least two weeks.
- So if you can tick the boxes to say, oh, I'm feeling low. I have lost weight. It doesn't mean you have depression, but those symptoms must be significant and lasting at least two weeks.

- [8 : 47] So some of the symptoms include feeling low, sad or depressed, loss of interest and pleasure in activities, change in sleeping patterns or sleep difficulties, significant weight loss, feelings of worthlessness, diminished concentration, hopelessness and recurring thoughts of death, suicidal thoughts or decreased energy, tiredness and fatigue.
- So, researchers don't know the exact cause of depression. They think the following factors contribute to the development of depression.
- So brain chemistry. So brain chemistry, genetics, stress for life events, medical conditions, medication and substance use. So brain chemistry, an imbalance in neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine contributes to the development of depression.
- So brain chemistry, genetics. So brain chemistry, genetics. So brain chemistry, genetics. If you have a first degree relative, a biological parent or sibling with depression, you are about three times as likely to develop the condition as the general population.
- However, you can develop depression without a family history of it. Traceable events. Difficult experiences such as the death of a loved one, trauma, divorce or isolation or lack of support can also trigger depression.
- [10 : 22] medical conditions, chronic pain and chronic conditions can lead to depression. Some medications can cause depression as a side effect.
- And substance use, including alcohol, can also cause depression or make it worse. ADHD, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.
- What is ADHD? It is a disorder that affects a person's ability to pay attention and control impulsive behaviors.
- So what does ADHD really look like? In children, ADHD can be misinterpreted as intentionally bad behavior.
- Children with ADHD struggle to pay attention during school and they frequently get into trouble for talking or getting out of their chairs.
- [11 : 29] Oftentimes, even their peers become frustrated by these behaviors, which can lead to isolation. So they end up on their own with no friends. ADHD in adults.
- ADHD can damage careers, relationships and self-esteem. Inattention symptoms can lead to forgotten responsibilities, poor organization and difficulty completing tasks.
- hyperactivity symptoms manifest as thrill-seeking or high need of stimulation and impulsive decision-making.
- So what causes ADHD? So what causes ADHD? Again, genetics comes into play. ADHD is a strong genetic component.
- It runs in families. It is often inherited and runs in families. A person is more likely to develop ADHD if their parents have ADHD.
- [12 : 34] brain chemistry. Brain chemistry. Genes believed to influence production or regulation of neurotransmitters like dopamine in the brain, which are involved in attention reward and impulse control.
- Brain development and structure. People with ADHD have differences in brain circuits compared to those without the disorder.
- Neurotransmitter differences. Individuals with ADHD often have lower levels of neurotransmitters like dopamine and neurodipine, brain, which can make it harder to stay focused on less stimulating tasks.
- Environmental factors. Prenatal exposure. If your mother smoked, drank alcohol or used drugs during pregnancy, there is an increased risk of developing ADHD.
- Environmental toxins. Exposure to certain environmental toxins such as lead found in paint and pipes in older buildings can lead to development of ADHD as well.

[13 : 57] Problems during development. Problems with the central nervous system at key moments in development may play a role in the development of ADHD.

So what are the symptoms of ADHD? Symptoms of ADHD are organized in categories. So we have inattention and hyperactivity.

So inattention may look like difficulties staying focused on activities, forgetting tasks, for example, homework or paying bills, missing small details or making careless mistakes, avoiding mentally demanding tasks, or you may seem not to listen when you are being spoken to, or maybe losing things quite often.

And then hyperactivity includes constantly moving or fidgeting, difficult sitting still, excessive talking, often fidgeting, tapping fingers or squirming, having difficulties with quiet tasks, or even speaking out of 10 interrupting others.

So looking at this list, I guess most of us can tick some boxes. But that doesn't mean you have ADHD. Everyone will occasionally experience symptoms similar to those of ADHD.

[15 : 29] We all forget things. And sometimes work is just plain and boring. That's normal. When a professional diagnoses ADHD, they must consider the intensity, the frequency, and the consequences of the symptoms.

If you can relate to some of the symptoms we talked about, and you think you may have ADHD, it may be helpful to do an online screening.

And depending on your score, talk to your GP, who can then make a referral to a specialist. ADHD can only be diagnosed by a specialist after a thorough assessment.

So if you think you need to assess yourself, just go on the ADHD New Zealand website and take the screening test.

It's free. Okay, trauma. So if you were paying attention, you will remember that one of the common triggers to all the mental health issues we have talked about so far is life events.

[16 : 48] So what is trauma? Trauma is a powerful emotional response to distressing events, such as war, maybe an accident, the unexpected loss of a loved one, or even abuse.

Trauma can continue to cause both emotional and physical symptoms for many years after the event is concluded. There are three types of trauma.

Acute trauma, chronic trauma, and complex trauma. Acute trauma results from a single stress or dangerous event.

And chronic trauma, this results from repeated and prolonged exposure to highly stressful events. For example, cases of child abuse, bullying, or domestic violence.

Complex trauma, this results from exposure to multiple traumatic events. secondary trauma, or vicarious trauma, is another type of trauma that may occur.

[17 : 58] In this case, a person develops trauma symptoms due to close conduct with someone who has experienced a traumatic event.

People who have a high risk of developing vicarious trauma include counselors like myself, social workers, first responders, our firefighters, police, emergency doctors, and nurses, and other people who do crisis response work.

Types of traumatic events. So we have the accidents and natural disasters, car crashes, plane crashes, fires, earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, and other natural disasters.

Violence and abuse. Physical assault. Being mugged or triggered. Maybe threatened with a weapon. Childhood, physical or sexual abuse.

Domestic violence or sexual abuse. Verbal and emotional abuse. Bullying, stalking, exposure to war, and torture or even terrorism.

[19 : 11] Loss and grief. Maybe the sudden loss of a loved one. The end of a significant relationship like a divorce. Chronic stress and life-threatening situations.

Living in poverty or facing extreme financial distress. Dealing with serious illness or threatening medical diagnosis. Prolonged neglect or abandonment.

Dealing with serious illness or life-threatening medical diagnosis.

Prolonged neglect or abandonment. Being in a prolonged abusive relationship. Being in a prolonged abusive relationship.

Symptom of trauma. symptoms of trauma symptoms of trauma so everyone experience trauma in a unique way some people will develop every symptom while other people will develop a few symptoms the following list of symptoms is not comprehensive and should not be used to form a diagnosis so just ticking one box doesn't mean you have trauma so avoidance of trauma reminders or including memories the flashbacks to the traumatic event you know reliving the event over and over again exaggerated stuttle excuse me distressing dreams and other sleep problems irritability anger and other you know negative emotions self-blame regarding the event or maybe feeling guilty blaming yourself regarding the traumatic event trauma is a negative consequence on one's life trauma can disrupt your life affecting your education your job and relationships trauma can be an underlying issue for other mental health issues because it affects the window of tolerance so what is the window of tolerance the window of tolerance the window of tolerance refers to the range of emotional and psychological states within which a person can function effectively when individuals are within this window they can manage everyday stressors without becoming overwhelmed or shutting down as you can see from that diagram there trauma can affect the window of tolerance it can narrow your window of tolerance so if that happens it doesn't take time for you to um to be thrown off by maybe a very little amount of stress for example a very little amount of stress can just push you into feeling anxious um feeling very angry just maybe blowing up like a volcano that's how we can put it and that is called the fight flight flight mode where you are in survival mode your board wants to fight or your board wants to run away it is not something that you plan to do or choose to do those reactions they just take over because you have a very narrow window of tolerance and then the same applies to the opposite where you can just feel like it's too much for me then you just go into shutdown your board just can't take it anymore again you don't choose that those reactions they just take over but the good thing is uh that window of tolerance can can be widened uh working with a practitioner can help you um expand that window of tolerance so that you can be able to manage you know day-to-day stressors without having to be thrown maybe into hyper arousal or into hypo arousal now that we know that anyone can be affected by mental health issues the question is are these mental health issues treatable the answer is yes and no

[24 : 09] so anxiety depression and trauma are treatable treatment includes medication and therapy medication can help control uncomfortable symptoms however medication does not fix the underlying problems so it is typically used in conjunction with therapy which is the reason why your gp will prescribe medication and refer you for counseling adhd sadly there is no cure for adhd although there is no cure for adhd both adults and children can manage their symptoms with medication and therapy and additionally some children will simply grow out of adhd with time so if some of these mental health um issues are treatable why are some people not seeking help so barriers to treatment societal barriers uh stigma mental health is stigmatized the negative attitudes prejudice and discrimination from the public family members friends and even health care providers can lead to shame and fear of judgment cultural beliefs or religious beliefs some cultures prioritize the family or community over the individual which can lead to preference of traditional interventions over professional mental health care also some religious or spiritual beliefs can lead to preference of professional mental health care for example some people prefer prayer over therapy and medication a lack of knowledge lack of knowledge lack of knowledge or lack of knowledge lack of knowledge or limited understanding of mental health issues or way to get help can prevent people from recognizing their need to help their need for help or where to find help language barriers communication difficulties can hinder understanding uh and accessing of appropriate services especially for migrants and refugees communication can be a challenge systemic barriers systemic barriers cost and affordability the cost of mental health services can prevent uh people from accessing treatment uh people from accessing treatment there are some not-for-profit organizations who provide uh free counseling services for example the uh agents i work for counseling services center uh they are a not-for-profit organization and they rely on funding from other organizations however the waiting time may be long because the waitlist is long and also the number of sessions may be limited because of the funding constraints and also youth line is another service provider that provides free counseling for our young people uh service organization poorly organized services or problems with the referral systems can make it complex to access treatment sometimes uh individual barriers fear of consequences because of the stigma attached to mental health the risk of discrimination in work social circles and cultural settings can prevent individuals from seeking help confidentiality concerns uh fears about privacy and maintaining confidentiality can prevent individuals from accessing help however people need to be aware that the youth professionals are bound by their code of conduct and confidentiality policies the lack of insight uh poor insight into the nature of one's own illness uh can prevent individuals from seeking help beliefs about treatment uh some people believe that mental health issues will resolve uh on their own or some people may have had past negative experiences with mental health care providers so how do we address some of these barriers to treatment uh educate yourself and others uh learn about mental health conditions uh to challenge the myths and the stigma the stigma um around mental health talk openly normalizing conversations uh about mental health in workplaces schools and communities creates a more accepting environment uh advocate for change support policies and legislation that prohibit discrimination in employment in other areas of life making it safer uh to seek help work