



**Sport
In Mind**

**British
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PSYCHOSIS

What is psychosis?

Psychosis is when a person perceives or interprets reality in a very different way from people around them. They might be said to 'lose touch' with reality. It can also be called a 'psychotic experience' or 'psychotic episode'.

The most common types of psychotic experiences are hallucinations, delusions and disorganised thinking and speech. Psychosis affects people in different ways. Someone might experience it once, have short episodes throughout their life, or live with it most of the time.

Some people have positive experiences of psychosis. For example, if they see the faces of loved ones or hear their voices, it may be comforting. Some people say it helps them understand the world or makes them more creative.

However, for other people psychosis can be a very difficult or frightening experience. Someone may find that it affects their behaviour or disrupts their life, makes them feel very tired or overwhelmed, makes them feel anxious, scared, threatened or confused, and/or leaves them finding it very difficult to trust some organisations or people.

It can also be distressing if people around them dismiss their experiences as untrue when they seem very real. They may feel misunderstood and frustrated if other people don't understand.

The word psychosis is usually used to refer to an experience. It is a symptom of certain mental health problems rather than a diagnosis itself. Doctors and psychiatrists may describe someone as experiencing psychosis rather than giving them a specific diagnosis. Some people prefer this.

Psychosis as a symptom

If someone is diagnosed with one or more of these conditions then they may experience psychosis. Alternatively, if they experience psychosis (and have other symptoms too), then they may be given one of these diagnoses:

- bipolar disorder
- severe depression
- postpartum psychosis
- schizophrenia
- schizoaffective disorder
- paranoid personality disorder or schizotypal personality disorder
- delusional disorder.

Some people experience psychosis on its own. If it is experienced for less than a month and a doctor doesn't think that another diagnosis describes the symptoms better, someone may receive the diagnosis of 'brief psychotic disorder'.

Psychosis and stigma

There are a lot of misunderstandings about what it means to experience psychosis. Lots of people wrongly think that the word 'psychotic' means 'dangerous'. The media often shows people with psychosis behaving like this even though very few people who experience psychosis ever hurt anyone else.