

Schizophrenia – A Primer

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Scope of this presentation

- ❧ What Schizophrenia is and what it is not
- ❧ What is the basis for the disability and where does it occur
- ❧ Onset and symptoms
- ❧ Recognizing the condition and what to do
- ❧ Signs of recovery

What is Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is a mental manifestation
of a physical condition.
Nothing more!!!

What Schizophrenia is not

- ❧ Schizophrenia is not a multiple or split personality disorder
- ❧ Schizophrenia is not caused by bad parenting
- ❧ Schizophrenia is not the result of bad childhood decisions
- ❧ Most people with schizophrenia are not violent or dangerous

What is the basis for Schizophrenia?

A disturbance in the brain's functioning

- ❧ Inappropriate levels of Neurotransmitters in the brain (Chemicals that carry messages from one brain nerve cell to another)
- ❧ Dopamine – Too much in certain areas of the brain
- ❧ Serotonin – Plays a contributory role

Where does Schizophrenia occur?

- ❧ Occurs in all races, cultures, socio-economic classes, and both genders
- ❧ Generally strikes young people for the first time in late teens or early twenties (Typical)
- ❧ Generally preceded by a perceived contradiction or paradox or mysticism in one's understanding of reality

Onset

Families are often not aware for a long time

- ∞ Sometimes a gradual build-up of symptoms that may or may not lead to an 'acute' or 'crisis' episode
- ∞ Sometimes strikes quickly with dramatic behavior changes in a matter of few weeks or even days

Symptoms

- ∞ Positive – Those that are present but should be absent
- ∞ Negative – Those that are absent but should be present

Symptoms vary greatly from one individual to another. No one manifestation is common to all

Positive Symptoms

- ❧ Delusions
- ❧ Hallucinations
- ❧ Thought disorders (Jumbled thoughts)
- ❧ Excitement
- ❧ Grandiosity
- ❧ Suspiciousness/ Sense of persecution
- ❧ Hostility

Negative Symptoms

- ❧ Blunted feelings (Instead of sharpness)
- ❧ Emotional withdrawal (Instead of emotional stability)
- ❧ Poor ability to get along (Instead of ability to establish rapport)
- ❧ Passive/ Apathetic/
Social withdrawal (Instead of assertive/ involved/
socially skilled)
- ❧ Difficulty in abstract thinking (Instead of ease and normality)
- ❧ Lack of spontaneity (Instead of apt spontaneity)
- ❧ Stereotyped thinking (Instead of an open mind)

What is the trigger

The stress-diathesis explanation

A combination of genetic, physiological and stressful conditions

?

Early Symptoms

- ❧ You are more suspicious and anxious
- ❧ Your mood alternates between very happy and very sad
- ❧ You have a sudden difficulty in sticking to routines
- ❧ You have difficulty in concentrating or remembering things
- ❧ Sometimes you feel like eating and sleeping a lot and sometimes, not at all
- ❧ You don't feel very motivated
- ❧ You are less concerned about things
- ❧ You seem to be thinking slowly or have fewer thoughts

More florid symptoms

- ❧ Your sense of sight, hearing, touch and taste is altered
- ❧ You see the world differently from others
- ❧ You think you have access to secret knowledge or information
- ❧ You trust people less and become more suspicious
- ❧ You are influenced by sensory stimuli, usually with no obvious source
- ❧ You think you know the actual intentions of others
- ❧ You don't understand why others cannot see what is clear to you

Changes in behavior that others can see

- ❧ Sleep problems
- ❧ Lack of energy, interest and motivation
- ❧ A sudden change in behavior or beliefs
- ❧ Easily irritable or angry
- ❧ A development of or increase in remoteness
- ❧ A sudden change of routine
- ❧ Increased hostility or suspiciousness
- ❧ Sudden and unrealistic confidence in abilities
- ❧ Abrupt carelessness in personal hygiene
- ❧ Unusual and drastic changes in food habits
- ❧ Forgetfulness or confusion

What to do

- ❧ Provide professional help
- ❧ Do not confront
- ❧ Postpone psycho-education of the affected person until insight
- ❧ Don't rationalize with him/ her
- ❧ Share mistrust and acknowledge beliefs
- ❧ Establish that it is okay to have different points of view
- ❧ Use examples from your own life (trouble with authority, experiencing failure, etc.)
- ❧ Suggest alternatives (e.g. Other people have found that such feelings could arise from stress...)
- ❧ Provide tactful nudges towards reality and be patient while awaiting remission

Anticipate...

- ❧ Demoralization, sense of failure, despair and depression as insight is gained
- ❧ Overreaching of vocational and other goals
- ❧ A possible tendency for substance abuse

Show how apparent failure

is actually a sign of progress

Encourage

- ❧ Conversation
- ❧ Sticking to a routine
- ❧ Adopting medication
- ❧ Maintaining a record
- ❧ Creative pursuits

Early signs of recovery

Receding of positive symptoms

- ❧ Auditory hallucinations go farther away
- ❧ Visual hallucination become less defined
- ❧ Olfactory hallucinations are less frequent
- ❧ Delusions become toned down
- ❧ There is an increased willingness to listen and trust

Later signs of recovery

Lessening of negative symptoms

- ❧ A relative increase in socialization
- ❧ Willingness to talk of the disability in the past tense
- ❧ Increased participation in chores
- ❧ Beginning to actively read and write
- ❧ Adopting challenges and hobbies that are appropriate (E.g. Photography, painting, music, writing, academics, etc.)

An Insider's View

Key insights to establish in the afflicted individual are...

- ❧ ... that regardless of whether the 'reality' perceived by him or her is true or not, would he or she feel productive, proactive, confident and interact with others while continuing to harbor the beliefs and perceptions he or she has currently?
- ❧ ... a belief that one need not compare oneself with anyone else in his or her unique journey through life
- ❧ ... that an acceptance of the 'here and now' with a willingness to patiently progress can override anything that he or she perceives is holding him or her back

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- ❧ www.psychiatry24x7.com
- ❧ www.mentalhealth.com

THANK YOU