

WHAT IS MENTAL ILLNESS?

One in five adult Australians will experience a mental illness at some time in their life. This means that you are not the only one in your class at school who has a mum or a dad with a mental illness. You are definitely not alone in your situation.

'Mental Illness' is a general term that refers to a group of illnesses. There are lots of different mental illnesses, and some have names like Schizophrenia, Bipolar Affective Disorder, and Depression.

Mental illness can happen to a person from any family in any country. Sometimes it can be hard to understand why someone gets unwell.



Episodes of a mental illness can come and go through people's lives. This means some people experience their illness only once and fully recover. For others, it comes back throughout their lives and they may need to keep taking medication or having other treatments for a long time.

Most mental illnesses, just like lots of other illnesses, can be treated.

People with a mental illness need the same understandings, patience and support given to people with a physical illness. A mental illness is no different – it is not an illness for which anyone should be blamed or ashamed.





Are people with a mental illness dangerous?

No! they are people, just like you and me. With treatment and support they can lead full lives.

Should people with a mental illness be left all alone and isolated?

No! they need support and understanding.

Can you catch Mental Illness?

No! it is not like a cold.

Mental Illness can make people think and act differently to other people who do not have a mental illness. Sometimes other people think they are weird or 'psychos'. This is because they do not understand mental illness and that kind of language can be very hurtful.

IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT!

No one knows for sure what causes mental illness. Some people think that trouble with chemicals in the brain together with problems that may have happened in someone's life, may contribute to a person having a mental illness or mental health difficulties.

What are these chemicals?

Different parts of our body have a job to do such as our skin, and our bones. The brain is very complex & controls the way our body works. It also has important chemicals that give us messages about laughing, crying, running, and many other things about how we behave and what we do.

☀ Sometimes the chemical balance changes and the person feels and acts differently . They may not know why they are acting this way and are not able to change it on their own.

☀ Sometimes people have lots of problems at once, such as worrying about exams, or things at work. They can become very stressed. This does not mean they have a mental illness but may mean they need to find ways to be less stressed!

☀ Sometimes a person with a mental illness needs to take medication like pills or injections that their doctor gives them to help make the chemicals just the right balance.

Remember - It's not your fault! No one can cause someone else to have a mental illness. You need to look after yourself too!

