

Working with Clients with Mental Illness

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Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services

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Learning Objectives

- ▣ Participants will learn some of the common symptoms of anxiety, depression and bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.
- ▣ Participants will gain basic understanding of common behavioral characteristics of some mental health issues and disorders.
- ▣ Participants will gain insight into the behaviors and capacities of clients who have mental health issues and the impact on their ability to make decisions, participate in their care and follow through with provider requests and directives.

ANXIETY DISORDERS

What we know:

Characterized by a number of mental and/or physical symptoms - sometimes with no apparent explanation

What it looks like:

- ▣ Fear of going crazy, fear of impending danger. General uneasiness
- ▣ Dizziness, light-headedness
- ▣ Chest/abdominal pains, increased heart rate
- ▣ Diarrhea
- ▣ Sleeplessness
- ▣ The degree/level of the anxiety reported appears out of proportion to the actual situation/stressor

Anxiety

- ▣ Intense fear
- ▣ Mistrust
- ▣ Avoidance
- ▣ Irrational thought
- ▣ Poor follow through
- ▣ Poor historian
- ▣ Poor Insight

Clinical Depression- Major Depression

What we know:

It is the leading cause of disability of age 15-44;
Affects 14.8 million American adults, or about 6.7 percent of the U.S. population age 18 and older annually; more prevalent women

What it looks like:

- ▣ Depressed mood most of day, nearly every day
- ▣ Anhedonia
- ▣ Weight or appetite change
- ▣ Sleep disturbances
- ▣ Psychomotor agitation or retardation
- ▣ Difficulty concentrating
- ▣ Fatigue
- ▣ Worthlessness/hopelessness
- ▣ Suicidal ideation

Depression

- ▣ Can't get out of bed
- ▣ No motivation
- ▣ Poor memory
- ▣ Poor follow through
- ▣ Sleeps too much or too little
- ▣ Misses appointments
- ▣ Slow to respond
- ▣ Poor insight

Bi-polar Disorder

What we know...

It affects 5.7 million American adults or about 2.6 % of the total population in a given year. The median age for diagnosis is 25 years.

What it looks like...

- ▣ Either manic or depressive behaviors - or a combination
- ▣ Behaviors are sufficiently severe to cause impairment in functioning

Mania

What it looks like...

Unusual/abnormal and persistent elevated (high) moods or irritability accompanied by at least three of the following...

- ▣ Overly-inflated self esteem
- ▣ Decreased need for sleep
- ▣ Increased talkativeness
- ▣ Racing thoughts
- ▣ Distractibility
- ▣ Increased 'goal directed' activities (shopping)
- ▣ Excessive involvement in risk behaviors or activities

Bi-Polar Disorder

- ▣ Inconsistent behavior
- ▣ Disorganized
- ▣ Poor historian
- ▣ Lack of follow through
- ▣ Easily angered
- ▣ Can't slow down
- ▣ Extreme depression
- ▣ Can have symptoms of psychosis
 - Break with reality
 - Audio/visual hallucinations
 - Paranoia

Substance Dependence

What we know

23% of persons 18 years and older diagnosed with a serious mental illness (SMI) were dependent on or abused illicit drugs or alcohol

What it looks like...

- ▣ Pattern of behaviors (at least three of the following in 12-month time)
 - ✓ Substance taken in larger amounts than intended
 - ✓ Unsuccessful effort to cut down intake.
 - ✓ Great deal of time spent to obtain the substance
 - ✓ Abandon important social, occupational, or recreational activities due to use
 - ✓ Continued use despite recognition of problem
 - ✓ Development of tolerance. Withdrawal symptoms when stopped

Substance Use

- ▣ Interferes with the client's ability to think rationally
- ▣ Creates increased opportunity for legal issues
- ▣ Poor follow through/missed appointments
- ▣ Mood instability
- ▣ Disregards dangers such as accidental overdose, arrest, deterioration of primary relationships
- ▣ Poor insight/denial

Personality Disorders

What we know..

It is an enduring pattern of inner experience and behavior that deviates markedly from the expectations of the culture of the individual who exhibits it.¹ Approximately 9 % of individuals 18 and over have a diagnosable personality disorder (PD)

What it looks like....

Thoughts & perceptions

- Ways of looking at the world, thinking about self or others, and interacting

Emotions

- Appropriateness, intensity, and range of emotion reactions

Interpersonal Functioning

- Skills in dealing with others

Impulse Control

- Managing behaviors

¹American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual on Mental Disorders, fourth edition (DSM-IV)*. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, 1994.

Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)

What we know...

Two percent of the general population have borderline personality disorders: 80% of those diagnosed are women

What it looks like.....

- ▣ intense fear of abandonment - leading to a self-fulfilling prophecy that involves a push-pull dynamic in all relationships; splitting
- ▣ unstable relationships
- ▣ poor or negative sense of self/unstable sense of self
- ▣ inconsistent moods
- ▣ significant impulsivity
- ▣ intense and sudden anger, directed both at self and others, as well as difficulty controlling destructive behaviors

Personality Disorders

- ▣ Impulsive
- ▣ Disregard for rules
- ▣ Indifferent to other's feelings
- ▣ Unstable relationships
- ▣ Unreliable, poor follow through, missed appointments
- ▣ All or nothing attitude
- ▣ Manipulative
- ▣ Poor insight

Schizophrenia

What we Know...

It is a chronic brain disorder that affects approximately 2.5 million Americans

What it looks like.....

- ▣ Belief that what other people are saying is not true (delusions)
- ▣ Hearing, seeing, tasting, feeling, or smelling things that others do not experience (hallucinations)
- ▣ Disorganized speech and behavior
- ▣ Loss of interest in everyday activities, like bathing, grooming, or getting dressed
- ▣ Feeling out of touch with other people, family, or friends
- ▣ Lack of feeling or emotion (apathy)
- ▣ Having little emotion or inappropriate feelings in certain situations
- ▣ Having less ability to experience pleasure

Challenges in Working with Clients who Have a Mental Illness

- ▣ Client's expressed goals may change between meetings or session; difficult to measure follow-through
- ▣ Client's inability to self-soothe and to regulate affect
- ▣ Validating client's perception of their situation may conflict with supporting their behaviors (i.e. anger and angry outbursts)

Anger

What is Anger?

- ▣ A natural response to perceived threats. It's a warning bell that tells you when something is wrong
- ▣ Causes a release of adrenaline – fight or flight
- ▣ Increased muscle tension, heart rate and blood pressure
- ▣ Triggers/encompasses other emotions like sadness, disappointment, frustration

Resources

- ▣ Connecting clients to community resources
 - Mental Health Cooperative
 - Centerstone
 - Life Care
 - Foundations Recovery Network
 - 211
 - Park Center
 - Urban Housing Solutions
 - Nashville CARES
 - Mental Health Association of Middle Tennessee