Facts About the Most Common Mental Illnesses

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

As part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Mental Health Services provides information about mental illness and services for people in need. The following viewpoint, presented by SAMHSA as a booklet, explains that while everyone has mood swings, feels distressed, or has changes in concentration at one point in time, mental illness develops when these conditions become severe and debilitating. The authors of the following viewpoint offer the facts about the most common mental health problems and try to dispel some of the myths about anxiety disorders, depressive disorders, eating disorders, and schizophrenia.

Mental health problems are health conditions involving changes in thinking, mood, and/or behavior, and they are associated with distress or impaired functioning. When they are more severe, they are called mental illnesses. These include anxiety disorders, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, depressive and other mood disorders, eating disorders, schizophrenia, and others. When these occur in children under 18, they are referred to as serious emotional disturbances (SEDS).

Anxiety Disorders

Panic Disorder
Panic disorder affects about 2.4 million adult Americans and is twice as common in women as in men. A panic attack is a feeling of sudden terror that often occurs with a pounding heart, sweating, nausea, chest pain or smothering sensations, and feelings of

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