

WHAT IS SCHIZOPHRENIA?

Affecting 2.4 million

Americans, schizophrenia is a serious mental illness that interferes with a person's ability to think clearly, manage emotions, make decisions and relate to others. Like diabetes, schizophrenia is a complex illness that affects everybody differently. The course of the illness is unique for each person.

COMMON SYMPTOMS :

PSYCHOSIS, defined as the loss of contact with reality, is a common symptom that usually involves:

- Delusions: the belief in things not real or true
- Hallucinations: hearing and/or seeing things that others do not perceive
- Disorganized speech/inability to generate a logical sequence of ideas
- *Check out NAMI Minnesota's guide to understanding psychosis!*
www.namihelps.org/NamiUnderstandingPsychosisBooklet.pdf

OTHER SYMPTOMS MAY INCLUDE:

- Emotional flatness or lack of expressiveness
- Inability to start and follow through with activities
- Lack of pleasure or interest in life
- Trouble with prioritizing tasks, memory and organizing thoughts

ADAM'S* STORY

I USED TO FEEL that people were conspiring against me and wishing ill of me. I was afraid that the FBI was after me. It was all torture: the fast, rapid heartbeat, the shortness of breath, the agony of never feeling safe, the inability to concentrate or feel pleasure. Eventually, once I was on the right medication for me, the symptoms subsided and the side effects became much more manageable. Counseling was also VERY important. Today, with the help of medications and counseling, I am able to recognize that my paranoia is not based in reality.

It felt like eternity, but I gradually began to feel more comfortable around others. Even better, I benefited from social interactions, and I found myself being able to help people who had similar problems. What a reward. I have found that conquering the symptoms of my mental illness was an opportunity for developing self-esteem and self-respect. I noticed changes in my character, among them becoming stronger and wiser. I have graduated from high school and college. I have held down many jobs, and I have been involved in NAMI. My support system, including the Assertive Community Treatment team, my mother and my friends, has been very important. Recovery from mental illness is possible and your aspirations are achievable!

*pseudonym