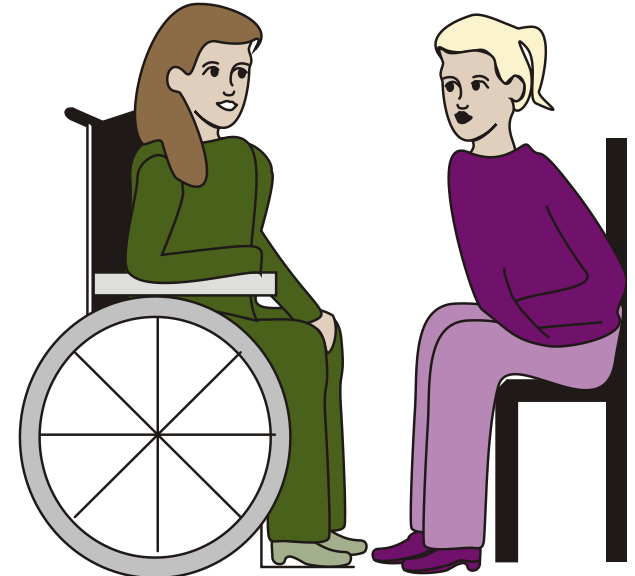


# Understanding Mental Health Conditions



# A mental health condition is an illness that affects your brain.



- This means that a mental health condition can affect the way you think, feel, or act.
- For instance, if you have been diagnosed with a mental health condition, you may:
  - Think that other people are trying to hurt you, even when they are not.
  - Feel very sad for long periods of time.
  - Act in ways that others find strange, such as talking loudly to yourself.

# There are many different types of mental health conditions.

- Different mental health conditions can cause you to think, feel, or act in different ways.
- Common types of mental health conditions are:
  - Depression
  - Anxiety disorder
  - Schizophrenia
  - Obsessive-compulsive disorder
- Mental health conditions may be related to:
  - Chemicals in your body
  - Traumatic experiences
  - Family history of mental health conditions



# Anyone can develop a mental health condition.

- But, if someone in your family has a mental health condition, you may have a greater chance of developing one too.
  - If you have a family member with a mental health condition, you should tell your doctor so that he or she can pay special attention to your mental health.



# You have an extra reason to learn about mental health conditions.

- Because of your developmental disability, it may be harder for your doctor to tell if you have a mental health diagnosis.
  - You and your support person can help your doctors by telling them if you are thinking, feeling, or acting in new ways that concern you or people around you.
  - Your doctor can decide if you have a mental health condition and will provide the right treatment for you, if you do.



# If your mental health condition is not treated, it could get worse over time.

- If you have a mental health condition that is not treated properly, you could:
  - Have a hard time living your life in the way that you want to.
  - Lose interest in the things you used to enjoy doing.
  - Perform poorly in school or lose your job.
  - Hurt yourself or others.



# Mental health can be a frightening and difficult topic to talk about.

- It is often hard for people to remember that the ways they are thinking, feeling, and acting are treatable and manageable.
- This can make mental health conditions a difficult thing to talk about.
  - Remember that there are people all around who want to help you.
  - By telling the people who you trust about how you are feeling, you are taking the first step in treating your mental health diagnosis!

# You can manage your condition by telling others how you are feeling!

- Different mental health conditions have different signs and symptoms, but all mental health conditions will make you think, act, or feel differently than you are used to.
  - This is a sign that you should talk to your doctor, family member, or support provider!
- It may be hard to admit that you need to talk to a doctor, but there are signs that you can look out for.





# For example, you should talk to your doctor if you:

- Are feeling sad all of the time.
- Feel nervous about everything.
- Are afraid to go out or talk to people.
- Hear voices that are not really there.
- Get very angry or upset whenever something small goes wrong.
- Feel like hurting yourself in any way.



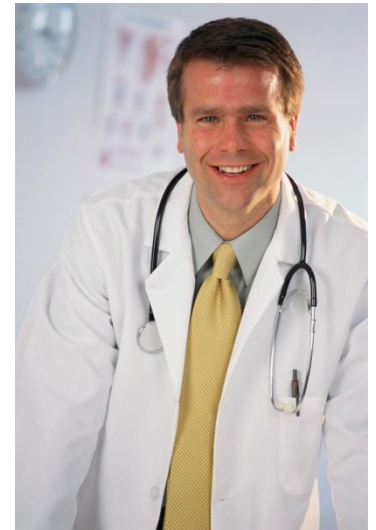
# You should be honest with your doctor, even if you feel embarrassed.

- You can tell your doctor about:
  - How you are feeling and how this is different from the way you normally feel.
  - If you are having any thoughts that scare you or that are different than usual.
  - If you are acting in ways that you do not normally act.
- This will help your doctor to decide if you have a mental health condition.



# If you have a mental health condition, your doctor will find a treatment for you.

- There are different ways to treat different mental health conditions.
  - Your doctor will be able to tell you which treatment will work best for you!
- Many mental health conditions can be treated with medications or with therapy.



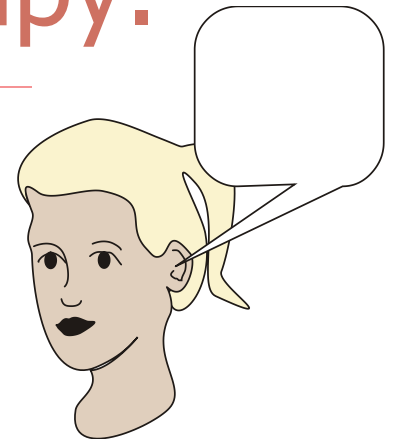
# Medications may help you to get better or stop you from getting worse.

- Before you start a new medication, be sure to tell your doctor what other medications you take.
  - Your doctor will know which medications can go together and which cannot.
- You should keep taking your medication until your doctor tells you to stop.
  - Even after you are feeling better, you may need to keep taking your medication.
  - If something does not feel right, tell someone!



# Your mental health condition may also get better with therapy.

- Therapy means talking with a doctor, nurse, or other therapist about your thoughts and feelings.
- Therapy can also mean using art or music to express how you are feeling.
- Your doctor will talk with you about what kind of therapy is right for you.



# You can tell your doctor about how your treatment is working.

- You are the person who knows best about how you are feeling and what you are thinking.
- You can tell your doctor about changes in your thoughts, feelings, and actions.
- If your treatment is not working well, your doctor will find another treatment that may work better.



# To keep yourself healthy, talk to others about your concerns.

- Most mental health conditions cannot be prevented.
- But, by talking to people about how you are feeling and what you are thinking, you can stop your mental health condition from becoming worse.
  - You can talk to anyone you trust – your friends, family members, support providers, or health care providers.



# You and your supports can learn more about mental health conditions.

- National Alliance on Mental Illness:
  - <http://www.nami.org/Learn-More>
- The Arc:
  - <http://www.thearc.org>
- The Missouri Developmental Disability Resource Center:
  - <http://www.moddrc.org>





# Your family and support providers can also check out these articles.

- An article for family members on “Dual Diagnosis and Your Family Member”
  - <http://www.ddssafety.net/health/mental-health/dual-diagnosis-and-your-family-member>
- An article for support providers on “Understanding Mental Health Conditions”
  - <http://www.ddssafety.net/health/mental-health/understanding-mental-health-conditions-0>

