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Understanding a schizophrenia diagnosis

Learn, connect, and take the next steps

A resource for people with schizophrenia and their loved ones

Actor portrayals.

Insights into schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is often misunderstood.

As research continues, our understanding of schizophrenia continues to evolve. Here's what we know today:

Schizophrenia is a complex brain disorder with no single specific cause.

- Family history (genetics), brain chemistry, environment, and other factors can influence and may lead to schizophrenia.
- It can affect people of all ages, with many being diagnosed in their late teens to early 30s.
- Symptoms may be caused by certain chemical messengers in the brain called neurotransmitters being too high or too low.

You are not alone.

- Approximately 2.4 million people in the U.S. have schizophrenia, with many reporting feeling lonely.
- Get help feeling connected with others by joining support groups, learning more about this condition, and talking openly about it.

Symptom improvement may be possible with treatment.

- It is important for you to play an active role in exploring your options and deciding with your healthcare providers what's best for you.
- You can advocate for yourself by having an open, honest conversation with your healthcare team.


Actor portrayal.

Some people living with schizophrenia may struggle with recognizing their symptoms and understanding their diagnosis. This is an experience known as anosognosia.

Actor portrayal.

Explore the spectrum of symptoms

There are 3 different types of schizophrenia symptoms. It is important to recognize and discuss them with your healthcare team.

Cognitive symptoms may include:

- Trouble with memory
- Difficulty understanding and making decisions
- Difficulty paying attention
- Unable to problem-solve

Negative symptoms may include:

- Difficulty staying motivated to complete tasks
- Decreased sense of joy or happiness
- Showing little emotion, not smiling or using facial expressions
- Social withdrawal, also known as asociality
- Avoiding communication and using minimal amount of words

Positive symptoms may include:

- Hallucinations, or seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, or smelling something that is not there
- Delusions, or holding beliefs that are not true or based in reality
- Additional challenges with thinking or speaking clearly

This is not a complete list of symptoms. If you're unsure whether what you are experiencing is a symptom of schizophrenia or not, it's always a good idea to talk about it with your caregiver and healthcare providers.

How symptoms may appear

Schizophrenia symptoms are different for everyone.
Certain symptoms may feel more present at different times.

At times, symptoms can worsen or improve.

- Cognitive and negative symptoms are typically the first to appear. They may become more noticeable as time goes on.
- Positive symptoms can fluctuate in intensity over time.
- Symptoms often overlap, with many experiencing a mix of symptoms at the same time.

Symptoms may change over time for many reasons.

Understanding the full range of symptoms can help people living with schizophrenia, caregivers, and their healthcare team. With appropriate support and treatment, overall symptom improvement may be possible.


Actor portrayal.

Taking steps toward your goals

As you continue to move forward, reflect and create goals.

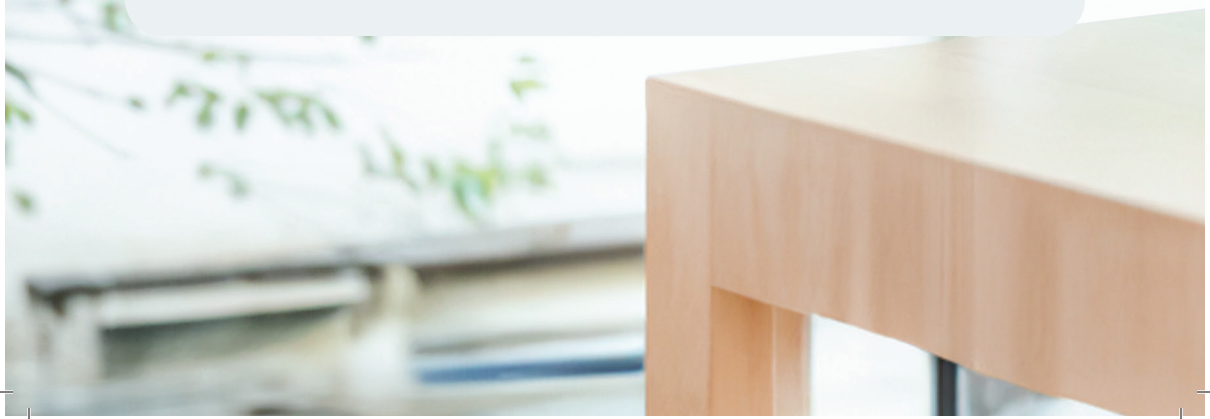
Setting personal goals can be a powerful part of your journey, and so is sharing them with your healthcare team. Your goals can guide your care.

You are an important member of your healthcare team.

Feel empowered to take an active role in decision-making for your health. Speak up, stay involved, and collaborate with your healthcare team to start working on your goals.

Here are 3 considerations when creating your goals:

- Think about what matters to you.
- Start small and be specific.
- Be open with your loved ones who support you and your healthcare team, so they can help you along the way.



Call or text 988 or chat online at 988lifeline.org for immediate support in a mental health crisis.

Actor portrayal.

Find support

While there is no cure yet, there is hope. Schizophrenia is a lifelong condition, but with ongoing treatment, care, and support, you can stay on top of your health and well-being. Connecting now to a support network can help along the way.

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
afsp.org

Caregiver Action Network
caregiveraction.org/schizophrenia

Clubhouse International
clubhouse-intl.org

CURESZ Foundation
curesz.org

Mental Health America
mhanational.org

National Alliance on Mental Illness
nami.org

Schizophrenia & Psychosis Action Alliance
sczaction.org

This is not a full list of local and national resources available.

Bristol Myers Squibb does not endorse these organizations. The information/links provided by Bristol Myers Squibb are meant for informational purposes only and are not meant to replace a physician's medical advice.

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