



What is psychosis?



Learning about the symptoms and factors that contribute to psychosis can be helpful, especially from someone who's been there. It's also helpful to talk about it.

Activity steps

1. Ask: What do you know about psychosis? Have a brief conversation.
2. Watch the **What is psychosis?** video together.
3. Walk through the handout.
4. In groups or pairs, explore the questions and activities below.

Reflect and discuss

What are your overall thoughts about the video? What stood out for you most? Why?

What came to mind when the speaker said mental or physical illness, substance use or extreme trauma or stress can bring on psychosis?

In her example of “positive symptoms,” the speaker recalls falsely believing doctors were using medications to poison her or for mind control, and believing she needed to cut off her arm to get rid of the poison. She also mentions hearing commands, seeing bugs and other hallucinations. How did you feel when you heard her story?

In her example of “negative symptoms,” the speaker lists struggles with motivation, oversleeping, social withdrawal, and other symptoms that sound similar to depression.

- How would you describe depression?
- If you felt symptoms of depression, who would you talk to about it? Why that person(s)?
- If you knew someone who had symptoms of depression, how would you help them?
- What makes you say that?



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The speaker also mentions cognitive symptoms including poor concentration and memory, mood disturbances, sleep disturbances, problem substance use, and suicidal thinking or behaviour.

- What steps would you take to help yourself if you had cognitive symptoms?
- What steps would you take to help a friend or family member who seemed to have cognitive symptoms?

The speaker says biological factors can increase a person's risk of experiencing psychosis, and environmental factors such as stress or substance use can trigger it. She explains the situation as an imbalance in serotonin or dopamine.

- How important is it to you to know about your family's health history?
- What are some healthy ways to reduce stress?
- What are some ways to reduce harm from alcohol, cannabis or other drugs?

The speaker says: *"In my opinion, psychosis is really when these symptoms start to become debilitating to your daily life and they interfere with your daily life."*

What comes to mind when you think of something interfering with your daily life?

The speaker says 3% percent of people will experience an episode of psychosis in their lifetime. Yet psychosis plays a dominant theme in the legends and stories of both ancient and modern times. How can we explain the human fascination with psychosis?