



Metacognitive Training (MCT)

# MCT 10 A – Dealing with Prejudices (Stigma)

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# What do the following people have in common?

- Wayne Gretzky (born January 26, 1961)
- Michael Jordan (born February 17, 1963)
- Tiger Woods (born December 30, 1975)
- Mike Tyson (born June 30, 1966)

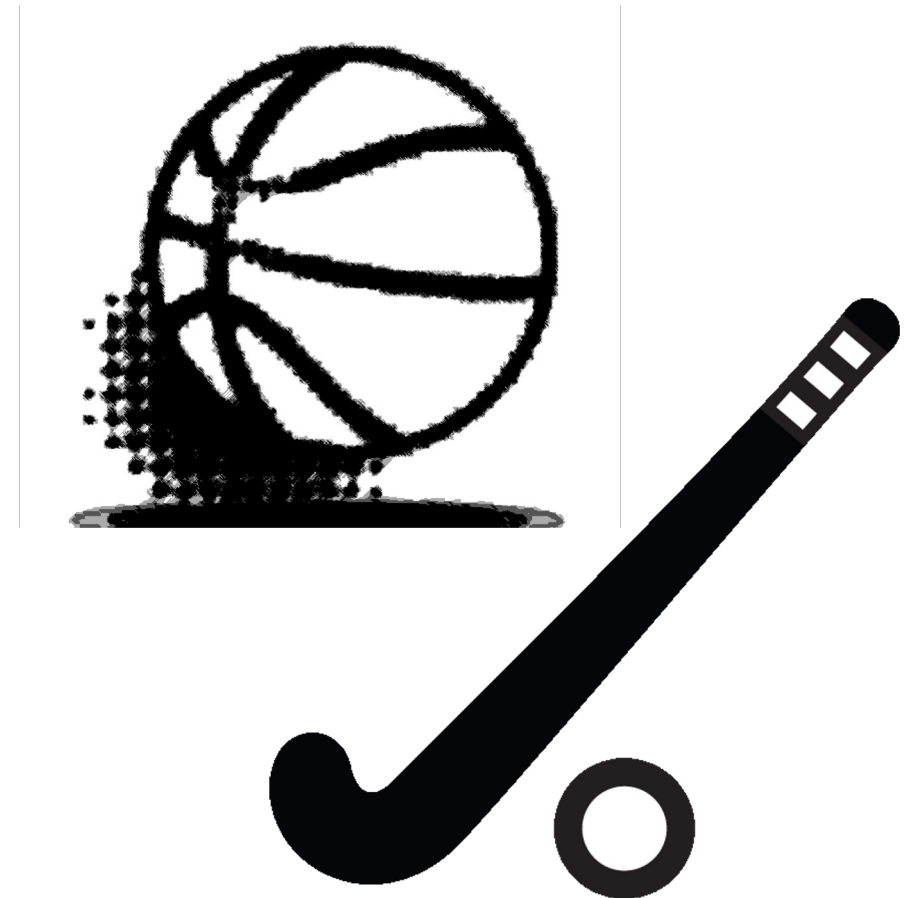
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Men, North American, famous athletes,  
still alive ...





# What do the following people have in common?

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- Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961)
- Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843)
- Charles Dickens (1812-1870)

???



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Men, already dead, and above all ...

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Anything else?

All these writers were diagnosed with mental disorders, two of them had symptoms of psychosis.





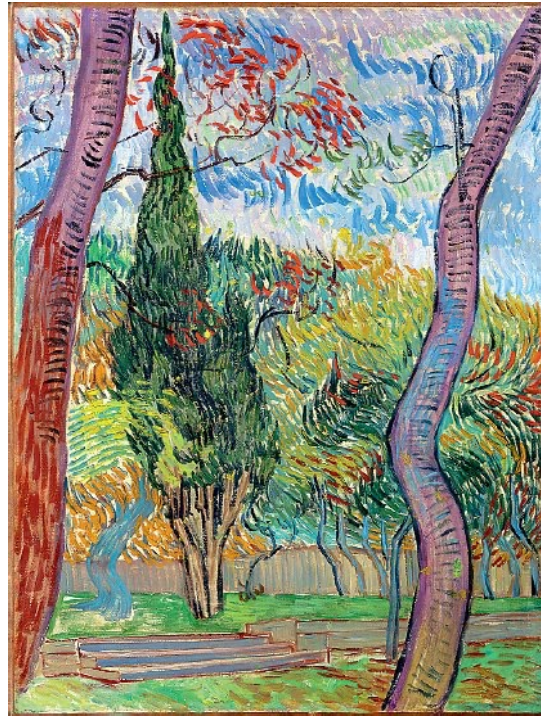


# Famous = Happy?

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>Fyodor Dostoyevsky<br/>(1821-1881)</p>  | <p>Fyodor Dostoyevsky is one of the most important Russian writers and is considered one of the most outstanding psychologists in world literature. Dostoyevsky suffered from epilepsy and was temporarily addicted to gambling. By the end of his life Dostoyevsky was financially secure and recognized for what he did in his lifetime.</p> |
| <p>Ernest Hemingway<br/>(1899-1961)</p>    | <p>Hemingway is regarded as one of the most successful American writers of the 20th century. In 1954 he was awarded with the Nobel Prize in Literature. During his lifetime he had periods of depression and heavy drinking. He was also suspected to have a bipolar disorder.</p>   |
| <p>Friedrich Hölderlin<br/>(1770-1843)</p> | <p>Hölderlin shaped the exaggerated image of “genius and madness”. He was one of the most significant German poets of Romanticism as Goethe and Schiller. Today Hölderlin would be most likely diagnosed with schizophrenia/psychosis.</p>   |
| <p>Charles Dickens<br/>(1812-1870)</p>     | <p>Dickens is one of the most read English writers. His most famous works include “Oliver Twist” and “A Christmas Carol”. He had manic and depressive episodes, today he would probably receive a diagnosis of bipolar disorder.</p>   |



Which of these paintings were painted by people with symptoms of psychosis?





Which of these paintings had the highest price at an auction?

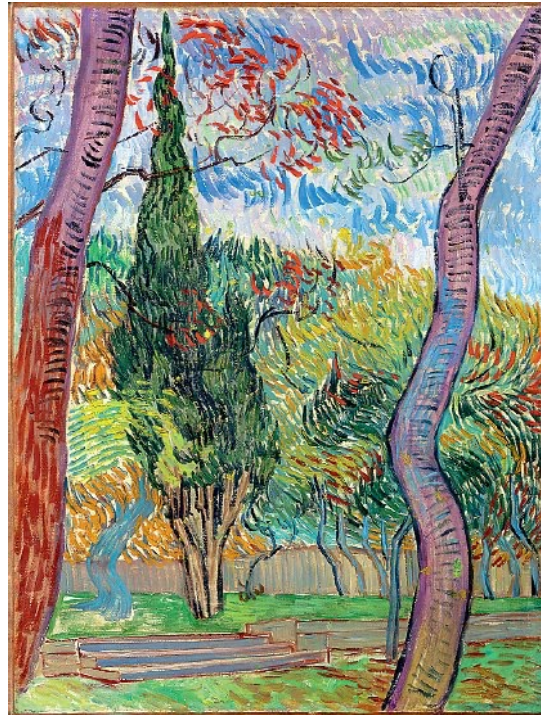




# Which of these paintings had the highest price at an auction?



almost €100 million



€25 million



€0



circa €10.000



# Edvard Munch

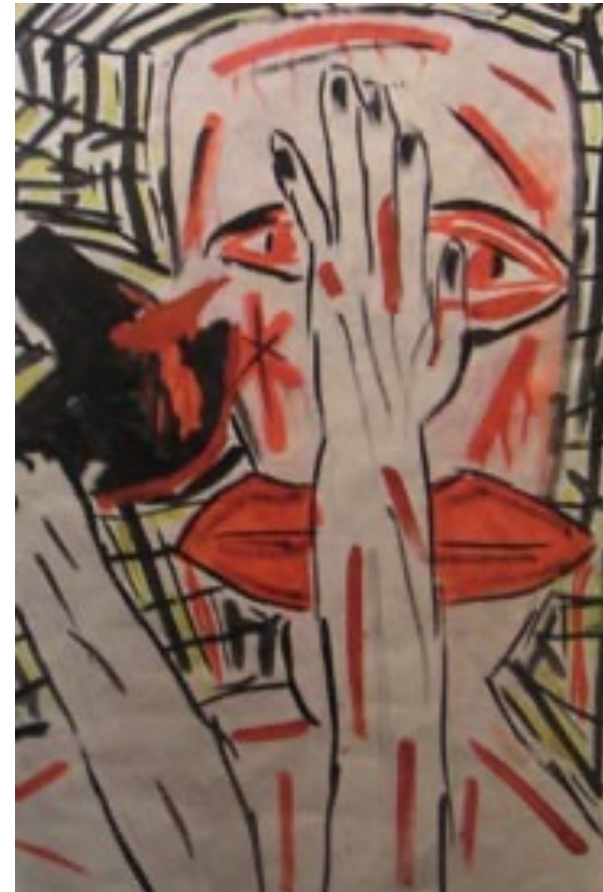
- An unknown buyer was willing to pay about € 100 million for the painting “The Scream”. This makes it one of the most expensive paintings in the world.
- The painter, Edvard Munch, probably had bipolar disorder:
  - He had manic, delusional, and depressive symptoms.
  - Due to his symptoms, Munch was a patient in a psychiatric facility for over 8 months.





# Steffen Moritz

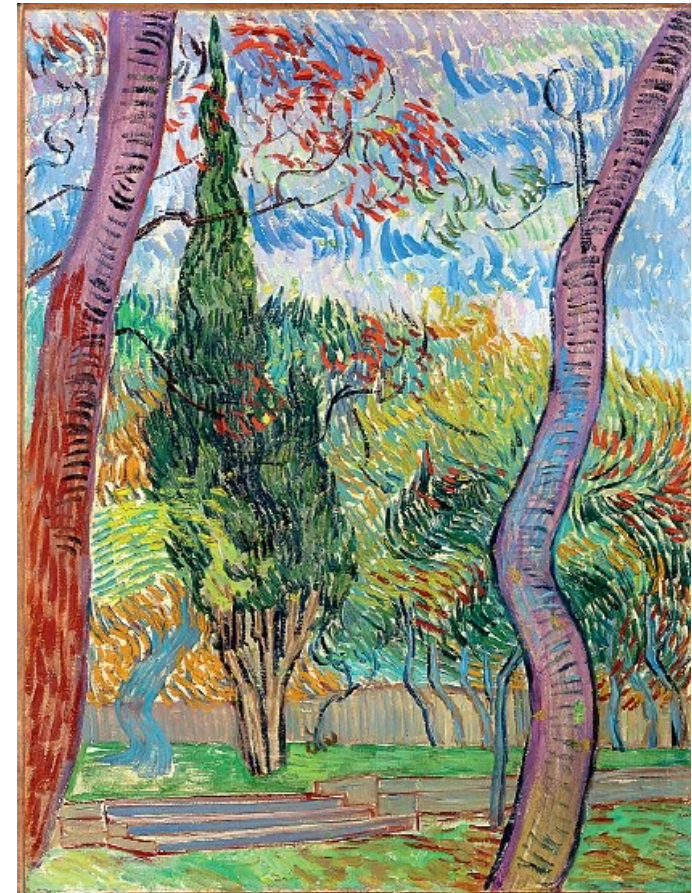
- The painting only has emotional value for the painter.
- It was painted by Professor Dr. Steffen Moritz at the age of 16:
  - He is a psychologist and head of the research group “Clinical Neuropsychology” in the Department of Psychiatry at the University Hospital Hamburg Eppendorf.
  - Steffen Moritz never underwent psychiatric treatment.





# Vincent van Gogh

- The painting “Park of Saint-Paul Hospital” is worth about €25 million.
- Van Gogh painted it in 1889 during his hospitalization in the Saint-Paul Psychiatric Hospital in France:
  - Van Gogh had heavy mood swings, self-injurious tendencies, anxiety, delusions, and hallucinations.
  - From today's perspective he would probably be diagnosed with psychosis or bipolar disorder.





# Ringo Starr (Drummer of the Beatles)

- Ringo Starr, who became famous as the drummer of the Beatles, has also been painting since 2005:
- The painting “Timberland” was completed in 2013.
- His paintings sell for thousands of dollars.
- As far as we know, Ringo Starr never had a psychiatric disorder.







## First conclusion

- Being mentally ill does not mean you are unable to do meaningful and valuable things.
- Mental illness can inspire as well as inhibit creativity.
- Geniuses like Van Gogh, whose creativity was never recognized during his lifetime, may have suffered from mental disorders.
- Some mentally ill artists can even live through their art (like Edvard Munch).



## First conclusion

- It is not possible to tell from a painting whether the painter is mentally ill or not.
- The same is true of appearances: You cannot tell whether or not someone has a mental problem based on how they look.



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Many of the greatest works of art have been created by people living with a mental illness. Does this reduce the value of their art?



## First conclusion

- It is not possible to tell from a painting whether the painter is mentally ill or not.
- The same is true of appearances: You cannot tell whether or not someone has a mental problem based on how they look.
- Points to ponder:  
Many of the greatest works of art have been created by people living with a mental illness. Does this reduce the value of their art?

Not at all!



# Is it “normal” to have mental problems?

How many people are mentally ill?

What do you think?



# Is it “normal” to have mental problems?

How many people are mentally ill (data from Germany)?

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Proportion of the people, who were mentally ill within the last year                         | 27.7% |
| Anxiety disorders (most common mental disorder, e.g. social phobia)                          | 15.3% |
| Affective disorders (e.g. depression)  | 9.3%  |
| Psychosis (all forms of psychosis, e.g. schizophrenia)                                       | 2.6%  |
| Percentage of subgroup, who were diagnosed with multiple mental disorders in this time-frame | 44%   |

If you consider people who suffer from individual symptoms of mental disorders without showing the full picture, the numbers are much higher.



# Is it “normal” to have mental problems?

How many people in Canada are mentally ill?

|  |      |
|--|------|
| Proportion of the people, who were mentally ill within the last year | 20%  |
| Depression (most common mental disorder)                             | 8%   |
| Schizophrenia / psychosis  | 1-2% |

If you consider people who suffer from individual symptoms of mental disorders without showing the full picture, the numbers are much higher.



# Special beliefs are not so uncommon ...

## Frequency of psychotic experience in the population

- Symptoms of psychosis (e.g., delusions) have long been considered rare and as a sign of a serious mental illness.
- We know now that (attenuated) psychosis-like experiences in the population are widespread. Unlike people with a diagnosis of psychosis, these experiences do not usually lead to the same challenges in everyday life.





# Special beliefs are not so uncommon ...

## Frequency of psychotic experience in the population\*

What do you think? How often were the following symptoms/experiences endorsed by individuals from the general population?

| Questions:   | Approved answers |
|--|------------------|
| Have you ever had the feeling that other people can read your mind?  | ???              |
| Did you ever think people can communicate telepathically?  | ???              |
| Have you ever felt things around you are unreal, as if everything is part of an experiment?                    | ???              |
| Have you ever had the feeling that things in magazines or on television had been written particularly for you? | ???              |
| Have you ever had the feeling that you are being persecuted in any way?  | ???              |
| Do you occasionally hear voices when no one is there?  | ???              |

\* Sources: Emmanuelle R. Peters (Instrument: PDI), Steffen Moritz (Instrument: KSF)



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What do you think? How often were the following symptoms/experiences endorsed by individuals from the general population?

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| Have you ever had the feeling that other people can read your mind?  | 33%              |
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| Did you ever think people can communicate telepathically?  | 61%              |
| Have you ever felt things around you are unreal, as if everything is part of an experiment?                    | ???              |
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| Have you ever felt things around you are unreal, as if everything is part of an experiment?                    | 26%              |
| Have you ever had the feeling that things in magazines or on television had been written particularly for you? | 16%              |
| Have you ever had the feeling that you are being persecuted in any way?  | ???              |
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## Remember ...

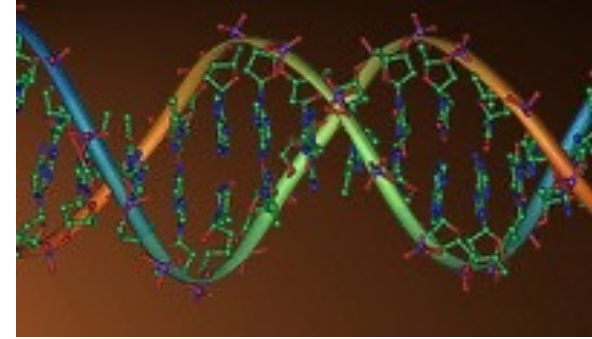
No one is *immune* to mental crises!

Over the last year more than every 4th person suffered from a mental illness.

A mental illness should not be regarded as a **weakness**, but rather as an expression of particular **sensitivity**.

**Heritage:** Genes play a role in many illnesses.

**Environment:** Traumatic negative experiences can also have a negative impact on our mental health, and increase the likelihood of mental illness in people with or without a predisposition for a mental illness.







# What is stigma and what is self-stigma?

???





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- **Stigmatization** occurs when people or groups are associated with negative attributes





# What is stigma and what is self-stigma?

- **Stigma = greek word. Literally it means:** point, wound or brand
- **Stigmatization** occurs when people or groups are associated with negative attributes
- This is done without a critical reality check.
- Stigma may lead individuals to be devalued and/or segregated.
- Stigma can occur in the case of certain diseases (e.g., HIV), visible disabilities, or mental illnesses, such as in psychosis.
- “Self-stigma” means that the affected people have internalized the stigma, which they experienced from outside, so strongly that they consider themselves to be “inferior”.





# Stigma towards those who experience psychosis

- What assumptions have you heard other people express about individuals who experience psychosis?
- What assumptions did you or do you have about individuals who experience psychosis?



# Stigma towards those who experience psychosis

Common but false assumptions that some people hold about individuals who experience psychosis:

They are ...

- dangerous and unpredictable
- multiple personalities (Psychosis)
- not intelligent
- permanent condition



Justified? NO!



# Stigma towards those who experience psychosis

Justified? NO!

dangerous and unpredictable?



# Stigma towards those who experience psychosis

Justified? NO!

dangerous and unpredictable?

People with psychosis are more likely to be victims of abuse and violence than offenders.

However: If they are offenders ...

- ... the newspapers may be more likely to report it, because it makes better headlines: the method the crime is carried out may be more peculiar or less well understood (e.g., mentally ill person assaulted the German politicians Lafontaine and Schäuble).
- The strategy of lawyers to justify acts of violence with claims of mental illness (true or not) reinforces this impression occasionally.





# Stigma towards those who experience psychosis

Justified? NO!

- **Multiple personalities:** This view is misleading. Experts disagree over whether multiple or split personalities even exist. In addition, symptoms of multiple identities are not criteria for a diagnosis of schizophrenia or psychosis.



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- **Not intelligent:** The formation of mental disorders is not related to intelligence. Just as with the general population, many people who experience psychosis can have above average intelligence.



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- **Not intelligent:** The formation of mental disorders is not related to intelligence. Just as with the general population, many people who experience psychosis can have above average intelligence.
- **Permanent condition:** With the right treatment, many patients are able to lead productive and fulfilling lives.



## Why are we doing this?

Many people diagnosed with “schizophrenia” or “psychosis” (but not all!) may experience discrimination if their diagnosis arouses incorrect assumptions or associations.

In order to reduce stigma, common stereotypes about people with schizophrenia or psychosis must be identified and corrected/addressed.



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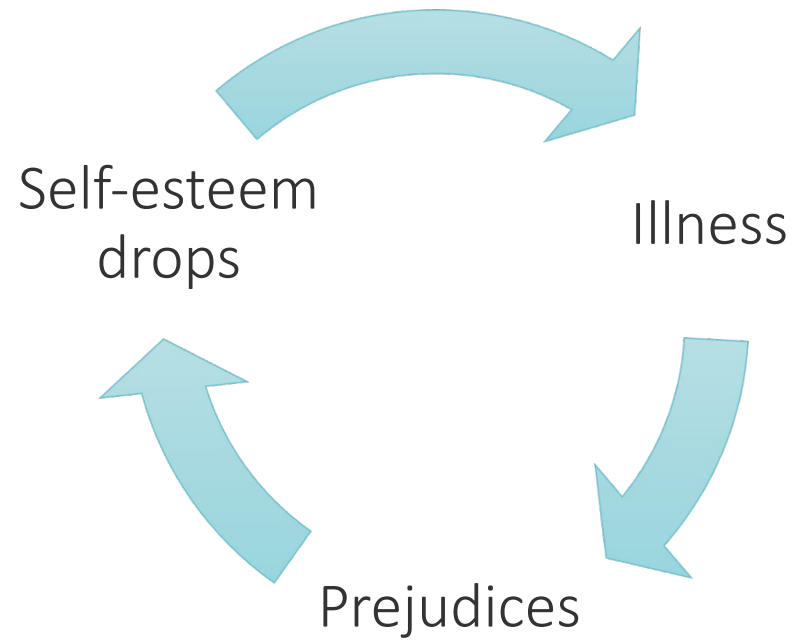
In order to reduce stigma, common stereotypes about people with schizophrenia or psychosis must be identified and corrected/addressed.

Relevant: If you take a closer look, every person has qualities that make them unique. Many prejudices or stereotypes are based on one aspect of a person’s identity. These prejudices or stereotypes can lead us to mistreat people who do not deserve to be judged negatively.

Mental illness is only one part aspect of a person’s identity.



# What should we do?



Read up & communicate accurately about your illness experience!



# Should I tell others about my illness, and if so, how?

Do you need to tell others that you are diagnosed with psychosis?

- A diagnosis of psychosis or schizophrenia (like any other mental illness) is not notifiable, that is, do not have to be disclosed.

It is up to you whether you inform others about the diagnosis or not.





# Should I tell others about my illness, and if so, how?

Do you need to tell others that you are diagnosed with psychosis?

- It can be important for you to talk to a person you trust about your illness, because:
- often significant other people spot the early signs of an emerging psychotic phase earlier than the patients themselves.







# How can I communicate my illness?

Recommendation: Explain your symptoms rather than telling the diagnosis.



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- Especially, if you do not know people very well, it is often advisable to describe your symptoms rather than to tell the (ambiguous) name (schizophrenia, psychosis)



# How can I communicate my illness?

Recommendation: Explain your symptoms rather than telling the diagnosis.

- Especially, if you do not know people very well, it is often advisable to describe your symptoms rather than to tell the (ambiguous) name (schizophrenia, psychosis)
- To be able to explain your illness to others, you need to become an expert of it yourself!



# How can I communicate my illness?

The main symptoms of psychosis and schizophrenia:

???



# How can I communicate my illness?

The main symptoms of psychosis and schizophrenia:

- Hallucination
- Delusions
- Other (non-specific) symptoms such as depression (this can also occur in other disorders)



# How can I communicate my illness?

The main symptoms of psychosis and schizophrenia:

- **Hallucination:** To hear, see, feel, or taste things that are not there (e.g., hearing offending voices) e.g., to be chosen to save the world or to be pursued by the secret service.



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The main symptoms of psychosis and schizophrenia:

- **Hallucination:** To hear, see, feel, or taste things that are not there (e.g., hearing offending voices) e.g., to be chosen to save the world or to be pursued by the secret service.

Example:

*"Approximately 15% of the population experiences hallucinations without being mentally ill. How can I describe it to you? It is comparable to thinking of a catchy tune but stronger, so you think it is real. Or else, to hear the doorbell when you are impatiently waiting for someone to arrive but no one is actually there."*



# How can I communicate my illness?

The main symptoms of psychosis and schizophrenia:

- **Delusions:** To be convinced of something that is not true (e.g., to be chosen to save the world or to be pursued by the secret service)





# How can I communicate my illness?

The main symptoms of psychosis and schizophrenia:

- **Delusions:** To be convinced of something that is not true (e.g., to be chosen to save the world or to be pursued by the secret service)

Example:

*“Almost everyone knows these days when you have an intense feeling that the whole world is against you. Or that people are looking at you, especially if you do not feel comfortable in your own skin. For me this feeling was much stronger. During the time of my illness I was 100% sure that there are certain people who were seriously after me. Now, I see it differently.”*

*“Almost everyone has had the experience of feeling ready to take on anything, and that no one does it better than they do. To me this type of thinking lasted longer and has led to several problems, for example at work ...”*



# How can I communicate my illness?

The main symptoms of psychosis and schizophrenia:

- **Other (non-specific) symptoms:** For example depression, communication disorder, or attentional difficulties



# How can I communicate my illness?

The main symptoms of psychosis and schizophrenia:

- **Other (non-specific) symptoms:** For example depression, communication disorder, or attentional difficulties

Example:

*“Everyone has times when they feel very sad, without being able to do anything and retreat. It was the same with me – except that this sadness lasted for weeks and there was nothing that could cheer me up. I did not feel just sad, but completely hopeless and worthless. At that particular moment you think that it does not go away and that it has always been this way. But then at some point the curtain opens up ... “*



## How can I communicate my illness?

Become informed about the topic of psychosis. The best way to correct the false views and misunderstandings that other people may have is to tell them the facts.



# Dealing with Prejudices (Stigma)

## Learning Objectives:

To prevent prejudice and stigma, it is important to communicate well your illness to other people.

- Mental disorders are common.
- You do not have to share details of your medical condition if you do not feel comfortable talking about it.
- It can be helpful and also important to tell people you trust about your diagnosis, for general support and to help relapse prevention.
- Sometimes, others may hold inaccurate beliefs of an illness. Explaining your symptoms (of psychosis) can be more helpful than sharing a possibly misunderstood diagnosis.



# Dealing with Prejudices (Stigma)

Many people with psychosis (but not all!) have to struggle with prejudice. To prevent prejudices, it can be helpful to explain the disease to other people.

**Example:** Due to a psychotic phase, Martin spent the last few weeks in the hospital. So far, he has told almost no one about his illness and so he has become more and more withdrawn from others.

**Background:** In the past, Martin had negative experiences with speaking openly about his psychosis. After he told his last boss about his illness, he was soon transferred. Therefore he is afraid that his friends think he is *crazy* and turn their backs on him.

**However:** During his current hospitalization, Martin participated in MCT, as well as other therapies and activities, and he decided to stop hiding from his good friends. Almost all of them responded reasonably to Martin's description of his symptoms. One of them even reported own experiences with the feeling of being persecuted and threatened.



# Thank you for your attention!

*for trainers:*

Please hand out worksheets. Introduce our app COGITO (download free of charge).



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