Providing the Irish community with information, resources, and opportunities to talk about mental health.

Understanding Mental Illness - Causes and Signs

Mental illnesses are common and treatable. People living with mental illness can recover and lead meaningful, successful lives

Causes of Mental Illness*

Mental Illness can be caused by a combination of:

• <u>Biological causes</u> such as genetic predispositions, chemical imbalances in the brain, or damage to the central nervous system from a severe head injury.

• <u>Environmental events and stressors</u> like exposure to violence and trauma, stress related to chronic poverty or discrimination, the loss of important people through death, divorce, or broken relationships, or any other serious hardships,

Recognize the Signs of Mental Illness*

- Persistent sad, anxious, or empty mood
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in ordinary activities
- Decreased energy or a feeling of fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating or trouble with memory and attention
- Intrusive thoughts and memories, obsessive behaviors
- Change in sleeping or eating patterns
- Substance use
- Thoughts of death or suicide; self-injury or suicide attempts
- Racing thoughts, pressured speech
- Suspiciousness, paranoia, hypervigilance

- Emotional flatness or lack of expression, apathy, feeling numb
- Difficulty planning or carrying out activities of daily life
- Disorganized speech and thinking, inability to express emotions
- Restlessness, irritability, or anger
- Social withdrawal, isolation
- Trouble understanding or relating to others
- Pounding or racing heart, shortness of Breath
- Increased risk-taking behavior, impulsivity
- Excessively cheerful, high, euphoricmood
- ·Difficulty perceiving reality
- Frequent and extreme mood changes

* Mental Health Fact Sheet." *Namichicago.org*, NAMI Chicago, 14 Mar. 2017,namichicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/WhatisMentalHealth.pdf .