

Paranoia

A person who is paranoid has fears, such as being watched, harmed or poisoned. He or she does not trust others and is suspicious that others are “out to get” him or her. It is normal to wonder if people are talking about you when you hear them whispering as you walk into a room. These thoughts are usually passed off and not dwelled upon for most people. A person who is paranoid, however, dwells upon suspicious thoughts. He or she goes out of their way to prove their suspicions even though no evidence exists to confirm their thoughts.

Symptoms

- Use and/or withdrawal of certain drugs, such as crack cocaine and angel dust (PCP)
- Alcohol withdrawal
- Deafness or problems with hearing
- Illnesses that affect the central nervous system, such as Alzheimer’s disease or other dementias, a stroke, a brain tumor
- Mental illnesses such as bipolar disorder (see at www.HealthyLearn.com) or schizophrenia
- Paranoid personality disorder

How to Recognize Paranoia

A person with paranoia may:

- Appear cold and aloof
- Be withdrawn and anxious in social situations
- Act stubborn and combative
- Appear “on guard” at all times, out of fear of being harmed

A paranoid person also:

- Complains about his or her health and often feels vulnerable and inferior to others

- Holds grudges easily
- Displays bitterness and resentment toward others
- May be easily drawn into religious cults or other groups with strict beliefs
- Can have delusions of being persecuted

Treatment

Treatment for paranoia depends on its cause. If it is a symptom of another condition, treatment for the condition will often take care of or lessen the paranoia. Paranoid personality disorder is treated with counseling, support therapy and sometimes with medication. Treatment for this disorder is not easy, though, due to the nature of paranoia. Persons who are paranoid often do not trust others including doctors, therapists or family members trying to help them get treatment.

What You Can Do for a Friend or Relative

- The most important thing you can do is to encourage your friend or relative to get professional help. Be aware that you may need to make the initial appointment with a professional. You may also need to take them to the appointment and stay with them.
- Be supportive. Paranoia requires patience, understanding, love and encouragement of the person’s loved ones and friends.
- Be aware of the types of medication your friend or relative takes and when they should take it. You should also alert their physician or psychiatrist to any side effects that you notice when they do or do not take their medication.