Environment

People who are exposed to adverse childhood events including abuse, neglect, divorce, witnessing domestic violence and having parents who have substance use issues, mental illnesses or are in jail are

• 2.6x more likely to have depression
• 5x more likely to have alcohol problems
• 17x more likely to have learning or behavioral problems
• 3x more likely to have serious job problems

RISK FACTORS

Bipolar disorder 75%

EARLY WARNING SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Having a combination of symptoms (not just one symptom) indicates that someone might be showing signs of a mental health condition. Be aware of these symptoms when they last longer than a few weeks:

• Sudden personality changes that are bizarre or out of character
• Serious drop in school or work performance
• Being overly suspicious or fearful
• Unexplainable changes in thinking, speech, or writing
• Hearing voices or seeing things that no one else can hear or see
• Thoughts or plans of killing or hurting one’s self or another person
• Hearing voices or seeing things that no one else can hear or see
• Curious behavior, such as loitering in parks
• Changes in energy level and sleep patterns
• Emotional numbing
• Problems with memory or thinking
• Distrust
• 17x more likely to have learning or behavioral problems
• 3x more likely to have serious job problems

Genes

17-28%

Mutli stronger links were found in twins and family studies. Estimates for total heritability, or how much a disease is tied to genetics, are

• 62% for schizophrenia
• 37% for bipolar disorder
• 75% for depression

In one study, head injury between the ages of 11-15 was the strongest predictor for development of schizophrenia, depression, and bipolar disorder.

Brain changes like building a “tolerance” or reward response to drugs, or abnormalities in the prefrontal and frontal cortex, are factors in the function of the neurotransmitter glutamate and are also risk factors for mental illness and substance use.

Substance use can increase chances of developing a mental illness

• 2.3x as likely to develop nicotine dependence
• 3x more likely to develop alcohol dependence

Lifestyle

People with any mental illness are:

• 30x more likely to develop dependence on other drugs

When you or someone close to you starts to experience the early warning signs of mental illness, knowing what the risk factors and symptoms are will help to catch them early. Often times, family and friends are the first to support a person through these early stages. Like other health conditions, we need to address the symptoms early, identify the underlying illness, and plan an appropriate course of action on a path towards overall health.

Biology

Cross-Disorder Group of the Psychiatric Genomics Consortium. Genetic relationships between five psychiatric disorders estimated from genome-wide SNPs. Nature Genetics, August


• Results from the 10-year follow-up of the National Comorbidity Survey. Addiction, 105(6), 1117-1128. http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3780458/

• A study of 173,416 twins with head injury.


• The presence of any mental health disorder is a risk factor for substance abuse, abuse and dependence and the respective risk factors for the 10-year follow-up of the National Comorbidity Survey. Addiction, 106(10), 1117-1128.

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Environmental risk factors include the following events:

• People who are exposed to adverse childhood events including abuse, neglect, divorce, witnessing domestic violence and having parents who have substance use issues, mental illnesses or are in jail are

• 2.6x more likely to have depression
• 5x more likely to have alcohol problems

Related literature:


• The 10-year follow-up of the National Comorbidity Survey. Addiction, 105(6), 1117-1128.

Additional reading:


• The presence of any mental health disorder is a risk factor for substance abuse, abuse and dependence and the respective risk factors for the 10-year follow-up of the National Comorbidity Survey. Addiction, 106(10), 1117-1128.

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