

How Do Mental Health Problems Start?

Causes & Treatment

How do mental health problems start? Explore common causes and risk factors for mental illness, including traumatic events and family history.

Mental illness is far from a rare occurrence. In fact, as many as one in five adults will be diagnosed with a mental health condition at some point in their lives. Knowing how to identify them is an important step toward recovery, but how do mental health problems start? And once they do, how exactly can someone get them to stop?

Today, we'll discuss a few common risk factors that can contribute to mental health conditions. By the end, you should walk away with a deeper understanding of how mental health problems start and the ability to recognize potential causes in your own life. From there, the Blackberry Center can help you heal from these underlying sources of pain.

Types of Mental Health Problems

Before answering the question, "How do mental health problems start?" it's important to understand what exactly "mental health problems" entails. Upon hearing that phrase, some people imagine specific mental disorders. On the other hand, others may envision general symptoms, like mood swings or a lack of motivation.

Both are valid interpretations, especially since most symptoms can be explained by diagnosing mental disorders. To expand the concept further, here are a few specific examples of mental health problems that can contribute to someone's symptoms:

- [Depression](#)
- [Anxiety](#)
- [Bipolar disorder](#)
- [Panic attacks](#)
- [Phobias](#)
- [Obsessive-compulsive disorder](#)
- [Post-traumatic stress disorder](#)
- [Schizophrenia](#)

How Do Mental Health Problems Start?

With so many different types of mental illnesses, it may seem impossible to find common threads between them all. However, many mental health issues can actually stem from similar sources. But how do mental health problems start from the same experiences if they're so varied?

Every human being is a unique individual. Two people can live through the same event but have completely different reactions. Based on both environmental and intrinsic factors, mental health problems can manifest in many different ways, even if they develop for reasons that appear similar at first glance.

With that in mind, here are five common reasons someone may be more likely to experience a mental health problem:

Traumatic Experiences

One of the most prominent precursors to mental illness is trauma. Upon asking, “How do mental health problems start?” most people will be asked to consider their recent history. If they recently experienced something difficult, life-threatening, or violent, they may be at a higher risk of developing mental health issues.

Examples of [traumatic events](#) include:

- Physical or verbal abuse
- Sexual assault
- Combat experience
- Unexpected loss
- Natural disasters
- Domestic violence
- Witnessing or being threatened by violence
- Car accidents

Trauma can even affect someone’s [physical well-being](#). Seniors who survived trauma earlier in their lives are more likely to fall ill or develop other chronic conditions as they age. On a more short-term level, trauma can also affect someone’s sleep patterns, gastrointestinal system, and other physical functions, which often contributes to mental health problems as well.

Childhood Neglect

When someone asks, “How do mental health problems start?” they may be looking for an answer that immediately precedes the start of the problem. In some cases, that level of direct correlation may be present. Other times, however, identifying the source of someone’s mental illness requires them to look a little further back.

Just as events in someone’s adult life can affect mental health, so too can [experiences from their childhood](#). Growing up in a tumultuous or neglectful environment can plant the seeds for many mental health problems, even if they don’t fully emerge until much later in life.

In any case, the connection between childhood trauma and mental illness is strong. For instance, one study found that [over 75 percent of individuals](#) with depression reported a history

of significant childhood trauma as well. Such a high number suggests that the events of childhood have a major impact on someone's mental health even as an adult.

Substance Abuse

In many ways, a substance use disorder is its own mental health problem. However, it can also lead to additional issues like depression and anxiety if left unaddressed. The simultaneous existence of multiple mental illnesses in this manner is referred to as [co-occurring disorders](#). They require specialized treatment to ensure all root issues are treated concurrently.

Co-occurring disorders are not rare, either. In fact, as many as half of the people with a [substance use disorder](#) battle another mental illness at the same time. But how do mental health problems start so frequently in the wake of substance abuse?

To find the answer, one simply has to consider the ramifications of addiction. Addiction can cause someone's physical and mental health to deteriorate. In addition, it can strain relationships and cause unwanted financial burdens. Any of these issues can evolve into mental illness if ignored.

Life Changes

Life is unpredictable. One of the answers to, "How do mental health problems start?" involves the unexpected twists in life. Some of these changes catch people off-guard, while others are simply painful to work through. For example, the loss of a loved one can result in [complicated grief](#) if someone cannot work through their grief in a healthy, complete manner.

Moving to a new place, changing jobs, relationship troubles, and physical health issues are all other events that can trigger mental health problems. Not all of these are inherently negative changes, but if someone isn't prepared for them, they can still be challenging to navigate.

Even expected life changes like [graduating from college](#) can have unwanted impacts on mental health. Any time someone enters a transitional period of their life, they must cope with several changes, often all at once. It doesn't help that some of these changes may be stressful or extreme. In these cases, stress can put someone at a higher risk of developing a mental health problem.

Genetics

Another possible risk factor for mental illness starts with someone's DNA. If someone has a mental health condition, someone else in their family is likely to as well. For example, a study of schizophrenia patients found that as many as [one in ten of their first-degree relatives](#) also exhibited signs of schizophrenia. Moreover, almost a quarter of them had a family history of psychiatric disorders in general.

That said, it's important to note that a [family history](#) of mental illness does not guarantee that someone will have mental health problems just because of it. For instance, there is no "depression gene" that gets passed down. Of course, that begs the question: How do mental health problems start when there's a genetic component, if not at birth?

Rather than being born with a mental illness, someone may inherit a certain flaw in the way their brain cells communicate. This is important because many mental illnesses involve neurotransmitters and how they interact in the brain. Therefore, if someone's brain chemistry works a bit differently from others, they may have a higher chance of developing mental health problems.

How Are Mental Health Problems Treated?

Answering the question, "How do mental health problems start?" is only the first step to overcoming them. Understanding where they come from can provide helpful insight regarding what underlying issues need to be addressed, but that leaves a final question: How, exactly, are mental health problems addressed?

Professional mental health treatment is the best path someone can take to achieve long-term recovery. It allows them to work with therapists and other mental health experts to unlearn negative mindsets, replace them with healthier coping skills, and build a life they are excited to lead.

The Blackberry Center offers several different mental health treatment programs to guide patients through this process. For example, we offer:

- [Inpatient Treatment](#)
- [Crisis Stabilization Services](#)
- [Dual Diagnosis Treatment](#)
- [Partial Hospitalization](#)
- [Christian Recovery Services](#)

As mentioned above, during each program, patients participate in a variety of therapies and other treatment options to develop important skills and new mindsets. Some of these therapies and activities include:

- Psychiatric evaluations
- [Individual therapy](#)
- [Group sessions](#)
- Medication management
- Family education
- [Recreational therapy](#)
- [Discharge planning](#)

Treat Mental Health Problems at The Blackberry Center

The Blackberry Center is a 64-bed mental health treatment center located in St. Cloud, Florida. Our tranquil, retreat-like facilities offer patients the opportunity to focus on recovery without having to worry about external stressors. We promote healing through compassion, respect, and positivity.

If you have any other questions like, "How do mental health problems start?" we would be happy to provide more insight. Please call our admissions experts at [888-512-9802](tel:888-512-9802) or submit a [confidential contact form](#) with your inquiries today. We at The Blackberry Center look forward to helping you however we can.