

What is psychosis?



Psychosis is an experience where it can feel difficult to tell what's real and what's not. You might see, hear, or believe things that others don't, or feel confused and disconnected from the world around you.

Psychosis itself isn't a mental health condition; it's a symptom that can happen for lots of different reasons, like mental health challenges, stress, trauma, or substance use.

Psychosis can feel frightening or overwhelming, but with the right care, recovery is possible.

Signs & effects

Psychosis can look different for everyone, but common experiences include:



Confused thoughts

Thoughts might feel jumbled or hard to follow, making it tricky to concentrate or explain what you're thinking.



Mood swings

Experiencing intense emotions like fear, sadness, or anger. Or feeling numb or disconnected from your feelings.



Delusions

Holding strong beliefs that others don't share, even if they seem unusual or unlikely.



Changes in behaviour

Acting in ways that feel out of character or that others around you might notice.



Hallucinations

Seeing, hearing, or sensing things that others can't.



Feeling disconnected from reality

The world might feel strange, unreal, or like you're watching life happen from the outside.

Causes

Psychosis can develop from a mix of different experiences and factors. Some common causes include:

Mental health conditions

Psychosis can be part of conditions like schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or severe depression.

Stress or trauma

Big life changes, grief, or traumatic experiences can sometimes trigger psychosis.

Substance use

Drugs like cannabis, methamphetamine (ice), or hallucinogens can play a role in psychosis.

Physical health issues

Things like infections, brain injuries, or autoimmune conditions can affect how the brain works.

Sleep deprivation

Going without sleep for long periods can sometimes lead to psychosis-like experiences.

Genetics and brain chemistry

Family history or changes in brain chemicals, like dopamine, may increase the chance of experiencing psychosis.

Experiencing psychosis is never your fault. Whatever the cause, there are ways to navigate what you're feeling. And remember, support is available every step of the way.

Recognising psychosis

Having a plan like the one below can help you notice patterns, understand how psychosis affects you, and prepare for situations that might lead to psychosis. This can make it easier to spot what's happening and respond in ways that support your wellbeing.

Psychosis management plan

Anticipate	What triggers worsen symptoms? e.g., stress, lack of sleep, conflict, substance use
Identify	How might I feel or act? e.g., trouble concentrating, hearing voices, feeling disconnected
Manage	What can I do to care for myself? e.g., grounding exercises, reach out to someone I trust, stick to a routine



Practical management strategies



Stick to routines where you can

Familiar daily habits like regular meals, sleep, and gentle activities can help you feel more grounded and supported.



Connect with people you trust

Keeping in touch with supportive friends, family, or health professionals can help you feel less isolated.



Use grounding techniques

If things feel confusing or overwhelming, try deep breathing, focusing on your senses, or holding a comforting object to bring yourself back to the present moment.



Limit stress where possible

Stress can make symptoms feel stronger. Take breaks, set small goals, and give yourself permission to rest.



Follow your treatment plan

If you're working with a health professional, things like medication, therapy, or support services can be important parts of feeling better.



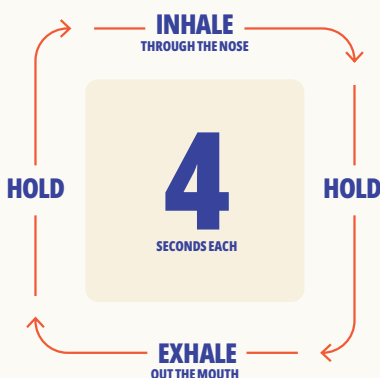
Notice early signs

Over time, you might learn what triggers or patterns come before symptoms. Writing them down or sharing them with someone you trust can help you feel more prepared.

Want to try something now?

If you're distressed or starting to feel disconnected, a small action can help. Try **using your five senses**, doing a few rounds of **box breathing**, or reaching out to **someone you trust**. Even small moments of calm and connection can make a difference.

BOX BREATHING



RECITING TECHNIQUE

You can try reciting:

- the alphabet
- the months, backwards
- what you did yesterday



TALK TO SOMEONE YOU TRUST



'Do you have time for a walk or phone chat today? Things have been feeling a bit heavy and I'd really like someone to listen.'



Everyone is different, so what works for someone else might not work for you, and that's okay.

The key is to keep experimenting until you find what helps you most.

Wherever you are, help is at your fingertips with the **Support Toolkit**

➔ lifeline.org.au/toolkit

When to seek help

You may want to speak to a health professional if:

- ✓ You're finding it hard to tell what's real and what isn't.
- ✓ You're feeling scared, overwhelmed, or unsure about your experiences.
- ✓ Symptoms are affecting your relationships, work, or study.
- ✓ You're withdrawing from people or activities you usually enjoy.
- ✓ You're having trouble sleeping, eating, or taking care of daily needs.
- ✓ You're experiencing thoughts of self-harm or harming others.

Reaching out can feel difficult, but it's a sign of strength.

Support is always available to help you feel more in control and hopeful for the future.

Support is available

Understanding and managing psychosis isn't something you have to do on your own.

Head to our **Support Toolkit** to find more practical strategies and discover national and local support services that can help.

The Support Toolkit also offers information on a wide range of mental health and wellbeing topics you can explore at your own pace, whenever you need.

Visit lifeline.org.au/psychosis/services or scan the QR code to get started.

If you're feeling overwhelmed right now, Lifeline is here to support you.

You can reach us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

☎ Call 13 11 14

✉ Text 0477 131 114

💬 Chat online at lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat

If your life is in danger, please call 000.



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