



Mental Health America of Franklin County

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Paranoia and Paranoid Personality Disorder

Paranoia involves feelings of persecution and an exaggerated sense of self-importance. A person with paranoid personality disorder typically believes that other people's intentions are malicious or suspect. Paranoia occurs in many mental disorders and is rare as an isolated mental illness. Since the delusions involve only one area, a person with paranoia can usually work and function in everyday life, however, their lives may be limited and isolated. There are different types of paranoia including conjugal paranoia, erotomania, hypochondriacal paranoia, and different types of paranoid disorders such as paranoid personality and paranoid schizophrenia.

Symptoms of Paranoia:

- A high capacity to annoy or enrage others because of rigid and maladaptive behavior
- Intense and irrational mistrust or suspicion, which can bring on a sense of rage, hatred and betrayal
- Taking offense easily and difficulty with forgiveness
- Defensive attitude in response to imagined criticism
- Preoccupation with hidden motives
- Fear of being deceived or taken advantage of
- Inability to relax, argumentative, abrupt, stubborn, self-righteous, and perfectionistic

What Causes Paranoia?

Researchers don't specifically know the exact causes of paranoia and paranoid personality disorder. It's been determined that there is a breakdown of various mental and emotional functions involving reasoning and assigned meanings. The reasons for these breakdowns are varied and uncertain. Some symptoms of paranoia may arise from repressed, denied or projected feelings. Paranoid thoughts and feelings can become part of a delusional system through an accident, a misunderstanding or minor injustice, heightened intimacy, or increased responsibility.

Treatment of Paranoia and Paranoid Personality Disorder

Treatment of paranoia is usually via long-term behavior therapy with a psychotherapist who has experience treating the kind of disorder. Treatment is aimed at reducing sensitivity to criticism and improving social skills. It can be difficult to treat a person with paranoia as they may be irritable, emotionally guarded, hostile, and unwilling; therefore, progress is slow. Therapy attempts to break the cycle of suspicion and isolation by using relaxation and anxiety management and by aiding the person to change certain behaviors. Medications may also be used to address specific symptoms.

Other Resources

American Psychiatric Association 1000 Wilson Blvd, Suite 1825 Arlington, VA 22209-3901 Phone Number: (703) 907-7300 Email Address: apa@psych.org Website URL: www.psych.org

National Institute of Mental Health Public Information and Communications Branch 6001
Executive Blvd, Room 8184, MSC 9663 Bethesda, MD 20892 Phone Number: (866-615-
6464) Website URL: www.nimh.nih.gov

Information compiled from:

Mental Health America, www.mentalhealthamerica.net

The Harvard Medical School Mental Health Letter, “Mental Health Letter-Paranoia and
Paranoid Disorders,” 74 Fenwood Rd, Boston MA 02115.

Mental Health America of Franklin County is a private, not-for-profit organization, established in 1956. We help people navigate the mental health system. We are dedicated to promoting mental health in Franklin County through advocacy, education, and support services. Our programs include: information and referral to community mental health and alcohol/drug services; free support groups for people with mental illness and their families; an Ombudsman program that assists clients in navigating the mental health and alcohol/drug system; mental health screenings in English and Spanish; Pro Bono Counseling Program where underinsured and uninsured individuals can receive free counseling; community and professional mental health education including Get Connected; maternal mental health support and advocacy (POEM); and a quarterly newsletter featuring legislative updates and new happenings at MHAFC. We receive funding from the Franklin County ADAMH Board, United Way of Central Ohio, individuals, foundations, and corporations. To become a member or find out more information, please visit us online at www.mhafc.org.