

Deciphering Mental Health Disorders

by Nozizwe Nuku

We often don't pay attention to certain disorders because we deem them as farfetched for us but over the years, a number of mental health issues are increasingly plaguing the youth. Here are a few disorders that seem to be on the increase among the youth:

Bipolar Disorder – a condition in which people go back and forth between periods of a very good mood and straight into depression, these mood swings can be very swift. It usually starts between the ages of 15 and 25. The exact cause is unknown but it has been found to be hereditary.

Any of the following may trigger episodes of mania in people with bipolar disorder:

- Life changes such as childbirth;
- Antidepressants or steroids;
- Hypersomnia or insomnia and
- Recreational drug use.



Schizophrenia – makes it hard to tell what is real or unreal, think clearly, have normal emotional responses and act normally in social situations. Like bipolar, there is no common known cause but genes may play a role. The statistics are equal in men and women though milder and begin later in women.

Depression – a condition associated with feeling sad, blue, unhappy, despondent or dejected even though most of us may feel this way at sometime or another for short periods. People with clinical depression have a mood disorder in which these feelings interfere with their everyday life for a week at a time or longer.

The following may play a role in triggering depression:

- Alcohol /drug abuse;
- Certain medical conditions including an underactive thyroid, cancer and / or long term pain;
- Some medications;
- Hypersomnia or insomnia;
- Stressful life events like breakups, failing a course or a year, death/illness of a loved one, abuse or neglect and/or social isolation amongst a list of other factors.

Should you feel an onset of these symptoms, feel free to contact the South African Depression and Anxiety Group on (011) 262-6396, Monday to Sunday 8am-8pm.

For suicide related emergencies, dial the Suicide Crisis Line on 0800 567 567.