By now, I am sure that if you know someone who has psychosis, you also know what they are going through.

Things to Know if someone has a mental illness…

It's not anyone's fault. No one can cause another person to have a mental illness.

People with mental illness are people just like you and me. They just happen to have an illness.

It can get better. With medicine and help from doctors, counsellors, family and friends, people with a mental illness do get better.

It's no joke. People should never make fun of mental illness. Ask your teacher, librarian or school counsellor to help you learn more about mental illness.

Understanding Mental Illness

Psychosis

For kids who might know people with psychosis.

British Columbia Schizophrenia Society
"Families Helping Families"

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HOW IS PSYCHOSIS TREATED?

Just like any other illness, doctors have ways to treat psychosis. There are pills that are used to treat the illness.

These pills may have to be taken for the person's whole life. They can often take away the voices and the strange experiences. However they may not take away the loss of interest in people and work and things like that.

You must remember that like diabetes, where most people have to take medicine for a long time, the same thing is true here also. Also, some people become ill, get better, get ill again and then get better again. Some people have to see the doctor all their lives.

It's hard to have any kind of illness.

Psychosis is harder because it is hard for a person to know when their brain is not working.

There are a lot of people working real hard to find a better cure for this problem and someday we will.

Maybe you will become a doctor and find better treatments!

GOOD LUCK!

WHAT CAUSES IT?

I'm sure you know people who have blood sugar problems (diabetes) or blood pressure problems (hypertension). Psychosis is a lot like that.

In diabetes, a part of your body in the stomach called the pancreas isn't working right. In psychosis, a part of your brain isn't working right.

When someone has diabetes, they usually have to take medicine. They also have to be careful about other things if they want to stay well. If they eat too many sweets it can make them ill again.

Psychosis is a lot like that because a person with psychosis has to take their medicine and also be careful not to do things that can make the illness worse. One way the illness can get worse is when people start drinking alcohol or using illegal drugs to help them feel better.

WHO IS TO BLAME?   Absolutely NO ONE!

Sometimes people wonder whether they did something that made the person ill.

Sometimes people may even say things like a family member caused it. But hey, no one can be the cause of these illnesses! It is a medical illness.

Even though psychosis seems like a pretty scary thing to have, there are good treatments for it. As long as a person takes their medications properly they should do well.

Chances are you know someone with a mental illness

"I can't understand her, my friend's mom speaks and acts so strange, she seems to talk to herself and they say she is 'paranoid'. I have no idea what is going on with her. *Mark*

"My friend's brother acts really strange. Sometimes he just sits there and doesn't do anything and sometimes he does weird things, like talk to imaginary people and say people are out to get him. I'm nervous to be around him, and I know my friend gets embarrassed." *Dolly*

"I saw a man on the street and he was talking to someone that wasn't there. It was kind of scary because I thought he might do something bad." *Steven*

So what's with all these people? They all suffer from an illness called:

Psychosis

Pretty strange word. Right?

Don't worry! It won't be so strange when you are done reading this. You will even know as much, or even more than some grown-ups!

First let's find out what it feels like to have psychosis.

Let's say you are sitting all by yourself and you hear someone talking to you. You look around...
There is no one there! The voice tells you all kinds of stuff to bug you. What would happen?

You'd go 'out of your mind' that's what!

You'd find yourself arguing with the voices. Talking back to them. If someone were watching you, they'd think you were pretty weird! That would be a real bad experience to have, huh?

Well, guess what? That's what happens to people with psychosis.

What would happen if, for no reason, you started to feel really suspicious? You might start believing that people were out to 'get you' or 'poison your food'. And then you tried to watch TV and the TV talked back to you! And then it felt like people were reading your mind or putting things in your head? Life would be really scary... This is what happens to people with psychosis.

What if you lost interest in everything? You no longer could do things you used to do. What if you lost the ability to feel love or to smile or the desire to work or play? Things are not looking too good for you, right?

2

Unfortunately this is what happens in the illness called *psychosis*.

It is no fun at all to have psychosis!

Psychosis is an illness of the brain.

You may have heard or seen someone who has had a 'stroke'. They may not be able to move their legs or hand. This happens when their brain gets damaged by a blood clot.

In psychosis, the brain is also damaged (in a different way) and does strange things to the person.

At times it makes voices that talk to the person, other times parts of the brain you think with get out of joint, which makes the person speak in strange ways.

Even when the person is not hearing voices or being suspicious, the brain is still not working right. Some parts might still be slow and not work very well, like the part of the of the brain that help the person show that they love another person, or the part that makes them interested in work or hobbies.

3