FACTS ABOUT MENTAL DISORDERS

“Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) affects 6.8 million adults or 3.1 percent of the U.S. population.”

GAD is characterized by persistent and excessive worry about a number of different things. Individuals experience excessive anxiety and worry, often about health, family, money, or work. It disrupts social activities and interferes with work, school, or family.

GAD is diagnosed in adults when they experience at least three of the symptoms below on more days than not for at least six months:

- Restlessness or feeling keyed up or on edge
- Being easily fatigued
- Difficulty concentrating or mind going blank
- Irritability
- Muscle tension
- Sleep disturbance

Panic disorder is diagnosed in people who experience spontaneous seemingly out-of-the-blue panic attacks and are preoccupied with the fear of a recurring attack. Panic attacks occur unexpectedly, sometimes even during sleep.

Some individuals do not know that their disorder is real and highly responsive to treatment. Some are afraid or embarrassed to tell anyone, including their doctors and loved ones, about what they experience for fear of being considered a hypochondriac. Instead they suffer in silence, distancing themselves from friends, family, and others who could be helpful or supportive.

GAD TREATMENT:
Evidence-based treatments include psychotherapy such as cognitive-behavioral therapy. This short treatment involves you in learning skills to help change your thinking and behavior patterns. It teaches you how to control your worry, decrease the impact of anxiety on your life, and learn new responses to stressful events, often within 12 to 16 weeks.

PANIC DISORDER TREATMENT:
Learn seven self-help steps to break the cycle of panic and regain control of your life.

Click here to download the charts in Facing Panic, Self-Help for People with Panic Attacks to help you practice and track the skills you learn to overcome your panic.

“Women are twice as likely to be affected.”
Mental Illness: Understanding Anxiety Disorders

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a serious condition that can occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a life-threatening event, such as a natural disaster, serious accident, terrorist incident, sudden death of a loved one; war; or rape or other violent personal assault.

It is characterized by four main types of symptoms:

- Re-experiencing a traumatic event through intrusive distressing recollections, flashbacks, and nightmares
- Emotional numbness and avoidance of places, people, and activities that are reminders of the trauma
- Feeling cut off from others and other negative alterations in cognitions (ways of thinking, understanding, learning, and remembering) and mood
- Marked changes in arousal and reactivity, including difficulty sleeping and concentrating, feeling jumpy, easily irritated, and angered

Depression is a condition in which a person feels discouraged, sad, hopeless, unmotivated, or disinterested in life in general. When these feelings last for a short period of time, it may be a case of “the blues.”

A major depressive episode is when feelings last for more than two weeks and the feelings interfere with daily activities such as: taking care of family, spending time with friends, or going to work or school.

There are three main types of depressive disorders:

**Major Depression:**

Symptoms may include persistent sad, anxious or “empty” mood, feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, worthlessness, and guilt, lost of interest, decreased energy, fatigue, insomnia, low appetite, weight loss, or weight gain, restlessness, or irritability.

May occur once or twice in a lifetime and may take place during or after the death of a loved one, a romantic breakup, a medical illness, or other life event.

Some individuals may feel that life is not worth living and will attempt to end their lives.

**Persistent Depressive Disorder** is usually continues for at least two years and it is less severe than major depression even when it involves the same symptoms.

It can manifest as stress, irritability, and mild anhedonia, which is the inability to derive pleasure from most activities.

**Bipolar Disorder** is characterized by a mood cycle that shift from severe highs (mania) or mild highs (hypomania) to severe lows (depression).

During the manic phase, a person may experience abnormal or excessive elation, irritability, a decreased need for sleep, grandiose notions, increased talking, racing thoughts, increased sexual desire, markedly increased energy, poor judgment, and inappropriate social behavior.

During the depressive phase, a person experiences the same symptoms as would a sufferer or major depression.

Mood swings from manic to depressive are often gradual, although occasionally they can occur abruptly.

PTSD TREATMENT:

Effective treatments include cognitive-behavioral therapy, such as exposure therapy, cognitive therapy, and anxiety management, as well as the medication class of selective serotonin uptake inhibitors.

The National Institute of Mental Health includes cognitive-behavioral therapy as an effective treatment option that lasts 6 to 12 weeks, although it may take longer. This teaches helpful ways to react to frightening events that trigger PTSD symptoms:

- Educates about trauma and its effects
- Uses relaxation and anger control skills
- Provides tips for better sleep, diet, and exercise habits
- Helps people identify and deal with guilt, shame, and other feelings about a traumatic event

RESOURCE:

WWW.ADAA.ORG