
Understanding Delusional Disorders

When a person has a delusional disorder, they believe things that aren't true. For instance, they may be convinced that others want to harm them. Or they might believe they are severely ill when that is not true. These thoughts (false beliefs) may cause great distress. A person is diagnosed with a delusional disorder when they have one or more delusional thoughts for at least a month that can't be explained by other conditions. These delusional thoughts are situations that are not real but are also not impossible, such as the severe illness described above. These delusions can have serious negative consequences on a person's life and relationships. But there are treatments that can help.

What are the symptoms?

A person with this disorder is likely to be overcome by untrue thoughts known as delusions. In many cases, these thoughts involve issues from the affected person's real life. These thoughts may become overwhelming and cause the affected person to do strange things. As a result, delusions may affect relationships or even employment. The affected person also might be depressed or angry. It is extremely difficult to convince a person with a delusional disorder that these thoughts are untrue.

Getting help

Urge your loved one to seek treatment. Your healthcare provider, local hospital, or mental health clinic can help. Medicines and therapy may help relieve many of this disorder's symptoms.

Medicines

Some medicines may help the person think more clearly. Others may make them feel less depressed. These medicines also may have side effects. If your loved one is troubled by side effects, be sure their healthcare provider knows. Changing the dose or type of medicine may help. A person taking these medicines should not stop, even if they feel better. If the person stops taking medicines, symptoms will likely come back. Also, these medicines should not be increased or decreased to manage delusional symptoms or medicine side effects without first speaking to the healthcare provider.

Talk therapy

Talking to a therapist may be a great relief. A therapist can help your loved one better understand and control their thoughts and learn ways to help prevent future problems. But most people with delusional disorder will need at least some form of medicine to control their symptoms.

Common delusional disorders

- **Paranoid delusions.** People with this delusion believe that other people want to harm them. As a result, they may be angry and resentful. They might even become violent to protect themselves.
- **Somatic delusions.** These delusions affect the senses. People with a somatic delusion may think that a part of their body has a foul smell. Or they may feel insects

are crawling on their skin.

- **Grandiose delusions.** People with this delusion believe that they have a great talent or skill. They also may claim to know, or be related to, someone famous.
- **Delusions of jealousy.** A person with this delusion may be convinced a loved one isn't faithful. The person may then stalk the loved one or try to control the loved one's actions.