



Glossary

Abstinence is when someone who has been using alcohol or drugs decides to stop using and no longer takes any alcohol or drugs at all. Some programs that provide treatments for alcohol and drug problems recommend abstinence. Other programs recommend reducing or changing use so that it is less harmful, rather than stopping altogether. See also *Alcohol problem* or *Drug problem*.

Acute stress disorder occurs when a person experiences a traumatic event and then has distressing symptoms such as difficulty sleeping or relaxing, flashbacks or nightmares about the traumatic event, a sense of numbing, a sense of detachment, or reduced awareness of their surroundings (e.g. being in a daze). Someone can have acute stress disorder if these symptoms last for at least 2 days after the traumatic event and up to 4 weeks after. If symptoms continue beyond 4 weeks, the person may develop posttraumatic stress disorder. See also *Anxiety disorder* or *Posttraumatic stress disorder*.

Advance directive is a document that explains how the person wishes to be treated if they become severely unwell (e.g. experience an episode of mania or psychosis) and cannot look after themselves properly. See also *Responsible Carer*.

Agoraphobia is a type of anxiety disorder that occurs when someone avoids situations where they are afraid a panic attack might happen. They worry that if a panic attack occurs it will be difficult or embarrassing to get away from the place, or that there will be no one around who can help. Some people may avoid only a few situations or places, for example crowds or enclosed places such as shopping centres. Others may avoid leaving their house altogether.

Alcohol or drug abuse is when someone is using drugs or alcohol at a level that causes harm to the person, such as problems at work, school or home, damage to health or relationships, or trouble with the law. It is not a matter of how much a person is using, but how their use affects their life and the lives of those around them. See also *Alcohol problem* or *Drug problem*.

Alcohol poisoning occurs when someone has a dangerous level of alcohol in their blood. It can lead to death. The amount of alcohol that causes alcohol poisoning is different for every person. It can also be called overdose. See also *Alcohol problem* or *Overdose*.

Alcohol problem is when someone has become hooked on alcohol, or they drink in a way that leads to problems at work, school or home, or with their family or community. A person who has an alcohol problem will be using alcohol at a level that places them at risk of damage to their health.

Amphetamine is a drug that acts as a stimulant and produces wakefulness, energy and decreased appetite. It is also known as 'speed' and other colloquial terms. Methamphetamine (often called 'ice' or 'crystal meth') is a very pure form of amphetamine. Dextroamphetamine, which is used as a medicine to treat attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is another form.

Antenatal depression see *Perinatal depression*.

Anxiety disorder is when someone's symptoms of anxiety are causing them to have trouble at work or school, in their personal relationships or with their day-to-day activities. An anxiety disorder differs from normal anxiety or worry because it is more severe than normal worries, it is long lasting and it interferes with the person's life.

Anxiolytics are drugs prescribed by a doctor that can reduce anxiety. These drugs are effective in the short term but can lead to dependence (becoming addicted) if taken consistently over time.



Bipolar disorder is a type of mood disorder that can also involve psychosis. A person with bipolar disorder will experience extreme mood swings. These mood swings involve switching between periods of depression, periods of mania and periods of normal mood. Bipolar mood swings are different to general moodiness which may cause a person to switch feelings on a daily basis, or several times a day. Sometimes people with bipolar also experience psychosis as part of their depression or mania. See also *Depression, Mania or Psychosis*.

Cannabis is a plant that is used as a drug to alter thinking, feeling or perception. It is also called 'marijuana', 'grass', 'pot', 'weed' and 'hash' or 'hashish'. Cannabis comes from a plant and is smoked or eaten. It is a depressant drug (that is, one that slows down thinking and the nervous system) and can also cause mild hallucinogenic effects.

Clinical depression see *Depression*.

Cocaine is a drug that is made from the leaves of the coca plant. Although it was once used as a medicine, it is now illegal to use and possess. It is a stimulant of the central nervous system and an appetite suppressant. Because of the way it acts on the brain, cocaine is very addictive. It can be taken in powder or crystal form which is often referred to as 'crack' cocaine.

Co-morbidity is when someone has more than one mental illness occurring at the same time. The term co-occurrence is also used to mean the same thing and the term dual diagnosis is often used to mean when someone has a mental illness and an alcohol or drug problem.

Complementary treatments and lifestyle changes involve using natural or alternative therapies (such as massage, yoga, meditation or traditional medicines) and changing the way one lives (such as connecting with culture, eating a healthy diet, getting exercise and proper sleep) to help reduce or manage the symptoms of mental illness. See also *Treatments and other supports*.

Dehydration is when the person does not have enough fluid in their body to maintain their blood pressure and body temperature safely. Dehydration places the person's health at great risk. It can occur with prolonged exposure to a hot environment (such as a dance party), while on some drugs (e.g. ecstasy), or without adequate water intake. See also *Overheating*.

Delusion is a false belief. It is a symptom of psychosis and an indication that the person has lost some contact with reality. See also *Psychosis*.

Dependence is when someone is using drugs or alcohol continuously over a period of time and cannot get through their day without it. Dependence means that the body has become addicted and therefore a person will have withdrawal symptoms when they stop using. See also *Alcohol problem, Drug problem, Alcohol or drug abuse or Withdrawal*.

Depressants are a group of drugs that slow down the nervous system (e.g. reduce heart rate and body temperature, or make the person relaxed and sleepy). Alcohol acts as a depressant.

Depression is when someone has a low or irritable mood, loses interest or enjoyment in activities they normally like, or has a lack of energy or is overcome with tiredness. Depression is a mood disorder because it affects the way people feel (their mood). To be diagnosed with clinical depression or major depression, a person must have had some symptoms for at least two weeks, and their ability to carry out their work or usual daily activities, or their ability to have satisfying personal relationships, is being affected by their low mood. See also *Mood disorder*.



Disability refers to the amount of impact an illness has on a person's ability to work, look after themselves and carry on relationships with family and friends.

Disease burden is the effect that a disease has on the population as a whole (e.g. the whole of Malta) through causing both early death and disability.

Drug-induced psychosis is a type of psychotic illness. It occurs when a person experiences a psychotic episode that is brought on by intoxication (being high or drunk) or withdrawal from drugs or alcohol (stopping all alcohol and drugs after taking them heavily for a long time).

Drug problem is when someone has become hooked on a drug or drugs, or they use drugs in a way that leads to problems at work, school or home, or in their family or community. A person who has a drug problem will be using at a level that places their health at risk.

Dual diagnosis is when someone has one mental illness, such as anxiety or depression, and also has an alcohol or drug problem. The terms co-morbidity or co-occurrence are also used to mean the same thing.

Early intervention is any treatment or activity designed to stop symptoms of a mental health problem from getting worse. The treatments and activities are received or used when the person first develops the mental illness or even before the symptoms become a diagnosable mental illness.

First aider is someone who gives the mental health first aid.

Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD) occurs when someone experiences long term anxiety across a whole range of situations and this interferes with their life. GAD is an overwhelming, unfounded anxiety and worry about things that may go wrong or one's inability to cope, together with many physical and psychological symptoms of anxiety.

Hallucination is when someone experiences something that is not real. Hallucinations can be auditory (hearing something), visual (seeing something), tactile (feeling something on the skin) or olfactory (smelling or tasting something).

Hallucinogens are a group of drugs that act on the brain to produce sensations that are not real (e.g. hallucinations such as seeing colours, lights or objects; feeling crawling or scratching on the skin; hearing noises or voices) or false beliefs (e.g. delusions such as having the ability to fly, having an altered sense of self or having magical powers).

Inhalants are chemicals that are breathed in for their effect on the body. Paint, glue and petrol are the most commonly used inhalants for recreational use. It also includes some gases that are used as medical treatments, such as nitrous oxide, which is used by dentists as a pain killer. The effects of inhalants can vary widely depending on how much and what type is used. A person who has inhaled a small amount of may appear drunk, while someone who has inhaled a larger or stronger amount may experience loss of time or disorientation in space, hallucinations or paranoia.

Interventions are treatments or activities that are designed to help mental health problems get better. Interventions can be aimed at preventing mental health problems before they begin, at stopping mild or early symptoms from getting worse (early intervention), or at treating a mental illness so that it either goes away or reduces to a point at which the person can manage their day-to-day life. See also *Early intervention*.



Intoxication is a word that is often used to describe when a person has had a lot to drink (i.e. they are 'drunk' or affected by alcohol). It can also be used to describe when a person is affected by drugs (i.e. being 'high' or 'stoned').

Loss occurs when a person no longer has access to someone or something significant to them. Feelings of grief, deep sadness, or a sense of hopelessness can often follow an experience of loss.

Major depression see *Depression*.

Mania is a symptom of bipolar disorder. A person with mania will have an elevated mood, be over-confident and full of energy. The person might be very talkative, full of ideas, have less need for sleep, and take risks they normally would not. The person can have grandiose ideas and may lose touch with reality (develop psychosis). A manic episode is when a person is experiencing mania. See also *Bipolar disorder* or *psychosis*.

Manic depression is an older name for bipolar disorder. See *Bipolar Disorder*.

Medical treatments are various types of prescribed medications and other treatments given by a doctor. See also *Treatments and other supports*.

Mental disorder is when a person experiences major changes in their thinking, feelings and behaviours, which disrupt their ability to work or study and carry on their usual personal relationships. The term mental illness is also used to mean the same thing.

Mental health crisis is when someone is very unwell and there is a risk of harm to themselves or others. Examples of mental health crises include suicidal thoughts, suicidal behaviours or an episode of psychosis.

Mental health first aid is the help provided to a person developing a mental health problem, experiencing a worsening of an existing mental health problem, or in a mental health crisis. The first aid is given until appropriate professional help is received or until the crisis resolves.

Mental health problem is when a person either has a mental illness or some symptoms of a mental illness. If the person only has some symptoms, they will not be so affected in their ability to work, study or carry on their usual relationships.

Mental illness is when a person experiences major changes in their thinking, feelings and behaviours, which disrupt their ability to work or study and carry on their usual personal relationships. The term mental disorder is also used to mean the same thing.

Mood disorders are a group of mental illnesses which affect the way people feel (their mood). Depression is the main type of mood disorder. It is not just feeling down when something bad happens; it can go on for weeks or months, and gets in the way of daily activities, family and community relationships. Other mood disorders include *bipolar disorder* and *perinatal depression*.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is an uncommon but very disabling type of anxiety disorder. A person with OCD will experience obsessive thoughts, which are repeated thoughts or urges that the person cannot get out of their head and which cause them distress. Compulsive behaviours are performed by people with OCD, in response to the obsessive thoughts, in order to reduce the anxiety they cause. See also *Anxiety disorder*.



Opioids are a group of drugs that are made from the naturally occurring poppy plant. Opioid drugs include heroin, morphine, opium, and codeine. Opioids are very strong pain relievers and have been used by humans for many centuries. See also *Depressants* or *Drug problem*.

Overdose occurs when the amount of drugs in a person's body leads to risk of death. A drug overdose should be treated as a medical emergency. An overdose of alcohol is referred to as alcohol poisoning. See also *Drug problem* or *Alcohol poisoning*.

Overheating is when the core body temperature rises above its normal level and the person becomes too hot. Overheating places the person's health at great risk. It can occur with prolonged exposure to a hot environment (such as a dance party), while on some drugs (e.g. ecstasy), or if someone has not had enough water and is dehydrated. See also *Dehydration*.

Panic attack is a sudden onset of intense uneasiness, fear or terror. This intense fear is inappropriate for the circumstances in which it is occurring. This means the person with the panic attack is very afraid in situations when others would not normally be. See also *Anxiety disorder* or *Panic Disorder*.

Panic disorder occurs when someone experiences panic attacks and for at least one month is constantly worried about possible future panic attacks and the possible consequences of panic attacks (such as a fear of losing control or having a heart attack).

Perinatal depression is when a woman experiences depression either during her pregnancy or within 12 months of giving birth. This is often labelled antenatal depression if it occurs before the birth, or postnatal or postpartum depression if it occurs after the birth.

Phobia is a very strong and unrealistic fear of an object, place or situation. Because they cause a person to feel great fear, phobias often lead the person to avoid the object, place or situation they are afraid of. This avoidance can interfere with the person's work or study, relationships or daily activities. The most common phobias are of spiders, insects, mice, snakes and heights. Other feared objects include a particular animal, blood, injections, storms, driving, flying, or enclosed places. Feared situations include social situations such as public speaking, public places such as shopping centres, or flying in a plane.

Phobic disorders are a group of anxiety disorders that involve a person avoiding or stopping activities because they have a strong fear, or phobia, of something. The fear is stronger and lasts longer than people without a phobia would experience in the same situation. Phobic disorders include specific phobias (such fear of spiders) and social phobia. See also *Phobia*, *Social Phobia* or *Anxiety disorder*.

Postnatal depression is when a woman experiences depression after giving birth. See also *Perinatal depression*.

Postpartum depression is when a woman experiences depression after giving birth. See also *Perinatal depression*.

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a severe form of anxiety disorder that can develop after a traumatic event. Someone with PTSD will re-experience the original traumatic event(s) through flashbacks or nightmares, will avoid objects or situations that remind them of the traumatic event, and will experience increased arousal (such as difficulty falling or staying asleep, anger, or feel constantly highly-strung or on edge). Many people who experience a traumatic event become distressed immediately afterwards, but most do not go on to develop PTSD. See also *Anxiety disorder* or *Acute stress disorder*.



Prevention is a type of intervention aimed at stopping mental health problems or mental illnesses before they begin. Prevention programs can be universal (for everybody in the community) or targeted (just for those who are at more risk of developing a mental illness).

Psychoeducation refers to teaching people about mental illness and how it can be managed. It includes information about risk factors, appropriate treatments such as medications, and how a person's lifestyle can be changed to help them get better. The person with a mental illness will benefit from learning about their condition, however, it is also helpful if family and friends who help support them also receive psychoeducation.

Psychological distress is a state in which people feel anxious or on high alert, experience difficult or distressing emotions (such as feeling hopeless or worthless), have difficulty relaxing or enjoying life, and are vulnerable to developing a mental illness.

Psychological treatment or psychological therapy involves providing a supportive relationship and changing the way the person thinks or behaves. Usually it involves talking face-to-face with a mental health professional, or sometimes to a group to reduce problems and to increase coping skills. See also *Treatments and other supports*.

Psychosis is a mental illness in which a person has lost some contact with reality. Psychosis alters a person's ability to know what is real from what is not real and causes severe disturbances in thinking, feeling, communication and behaviour. Psychosis can severely disrupt a person's life. See also *Delusions, Hallucinations, Psychotic disorders or Schizophrenia*.

Psychotic depression is a type of psychotic illness. It occurs when the depression is so intense that it causes psychotic symptoms. A person with psychotic depression will have the same symptoms as clinical depression, but will also experience hallucinations or delusions. See also *Psychosis or Depression*.

Psychotic disorders are mental illnesses that involve episodes of psychosis. See also *Psychosis, Delusions, Hallucinations or Schizophrenia*.

Rehabilitation programs involve helping people to learn skills and confidence so that they can live and work more successfully in their community.

Rehabilitation programs can focus on developing the ability to go to work, go to school, create good friendships, or reduce problem behaviours, such as using too much alcohol or other drugs. See also *Treatments and other supports*.

Relapse is when a person who has stopped using alcohol or drugs for a period of time goes back to using. Relapse is often a part of 'getting clean' or changing alcohol or drug problems. Many people who try to stop or change their use may relapse once or several times before making a change for good.

Responsible Carer, under Maltese Law, gives the patient the right to choose a person of trust who will take a direct and active part, together with the multidisciplinary team and the patient, in care decisions whilst representing the patient's interest as required. In cases where a person is considered to lack mental capacity the law provides for informed consent to be given by the responsible carer. See also *Advance directive*.

Schizoaffective disorder is a type of psychotic disorder. It occurs when someone has symptoms of both schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. See also *Schizophrenia or Bipolar disorder*.



Schizophrenia is a severe but uncommon form of psychotic disorder, in which someone loses touch with reality. Someone with schizophrenia will experience delusions and hallucinations, thinking difficulties, loss of drive or lack of motivation, blunted or inappropriate emotions and social withdrawal. See also *Psychotic disorders, Delusions or Hallucinations*.

Self medication is when a person uses alcohol or other drugs to help themselves 'feel better' or to help them cope with problems in their life. The problem with self medication is that it can make the person's problems worse, for instance, by making them sick, making their mental health problems worse, or by affecting their relationships with family and community.

Social phobia occurs when someone avoids social situations because of a fear that they will be negatively judged by others. People with social phobia often fear behaving in a way that is embarrassing or humiliating. See also *Phobia, Phobic disorders or Anxiety disorder*.

Stages of change are a way of understanding the process people go through as they try to stop, reduce, or change their alcohol or drug use. There are five stages of change, and the person may move back and forth between the stages at different times. Understanding which stage of change the person is in can help direct a first aider's actions.

Stigma is the negative attitudes the community has about people with mental health problems, or the shame some people feel when they, or someone they know, experiences a mental illness.

Stimulants are a group of drugs that speed up the nervous system (e.g. increase the heart rate and body temperature, or make the person wide awake). Examples are cocaine and amphetamines.

Substance use disorders occur when people become hooked on alcohol or another drug (substances), or they use alcohol or another drug in a way that leads to problems at work, school or in the home, family or community. It also means that a person uses alcohol or drugs at a level that causes damage to their health.

Sudden sniffing death is when someone who has been sniffing inhalants dies because their heart and lungs fail suddenly. This can occur when a person who has been using inhalants gets a fright or tries to run. See also *Inhalants*.

Reasonable adjustment refers to changes to the work environment that allow a person with a mental illness to work safely and productively. Examples of adjustments an employer may need to make are reviewing and adjusting the performance requirements of the job or arranging flexible work hours. Many employees with mental health problems will not need any adjustments, and some may only require minor changes.

Trauma is a reaction to an extremely distressing event. Trauma can occur when someone experiences, witnesses or hears unexpectedly about a situation involving actual or threatened death or serious injury.

Withdrawal occurs when someone stops using alcohol or drugs that their body has become dependent on (addicted to). Symptoms of withdrawal include headaches, shakes or sweats, nausea or vomiting. Withdrawal is different to a hangover. See also *Dependence, Alcohol problem or Drug problem*.