

## **Mental illness only effects a few people, doesn't it?**

Mental illness is common. For example, about one in every hundred people will develop schizophrenia at some time in their lives and up to two in every hundred will develop bipolar disorder. Overall, about twenty in every hundred people will experience some form of mental health problem at some time in their lives.

## **Aren't mentally ill people generally violent?**

Research indicates that people being treated for a mental illness are no more violent or dangerous than the general population. If anything, they are more likely to be the victims of violence, especially self-harm. A small sub-group of people with a mental illness may be more violent than the general population. These are likely to be people who have a history of violent behaviour, who abuse drugs or alcohol, and who are not receiving treatment or taking medication as prescribed. Mental illness is associated with only a minuscule proportion of the violence which occurs in society.

## **Shouldn't people with a mental illness be kept in hospital?**

With modern medications and treatment, there is generally no reason for people with a mental illness to be in hospital for more than a few weeks when they are unwell. . . as with many other types of illness. There is now an emphasis on treatment in the community so that people can continue to live at home. However, we need to ensure that there is sufficient support in the community for people with a mental illness — accommodation, rehabilitation, recreation and help back to work. Understanding and respect from others is an important form of support that all of us can give.

## **People with a mental illness never get better, do they?**

Contrary to what is commonly believed, most people with a mental illness recover well with appropriate ongoing treatment and support. For some there will be a psychiatric disability. The vast majority of people with a psychiatric disability are able to live independently (and often to work) in the community, if given the opportunity and support to do so.

## **And what about schizophrenia . . . that means split personality, right?**

Wrong Schizophrenia has nothing to do with so-called split personality. It is an illness, a medical condition which affects the normal functioning of the brain, interfering with a person's ability to think, feel and act. Some do recover completely, and, with time, most find that their symptoms improve. There is no cure yet, but it is a treatable illness.

## **How do I find out more?**

It is important to ask your doctor about any concerns you have.

SANE Australia also produces a range of easy-to-read publications and multimedia resources on mental illness.

For more information about this topic see:

### **🔗 [SANE Guide for Consumers](#)**

Provides practical suggestions on ways you can look after yourself, explains what words like 'diagnosis' and 'treatment' actually mean and describes how treatment and medication can help you.

### **🔗 [SANE Guide for Families](#)**

Explains how to better handle common issues associated with being a carer such as developing a positive attitude, looking after yourself and getting the help you are entitled to.

### **🔗 [SANE Guide to Medication and other Treatments](#)**

Explains how all the different aspects of treatment work, by looking at clinical care, medication, support in the community and helping yourself.