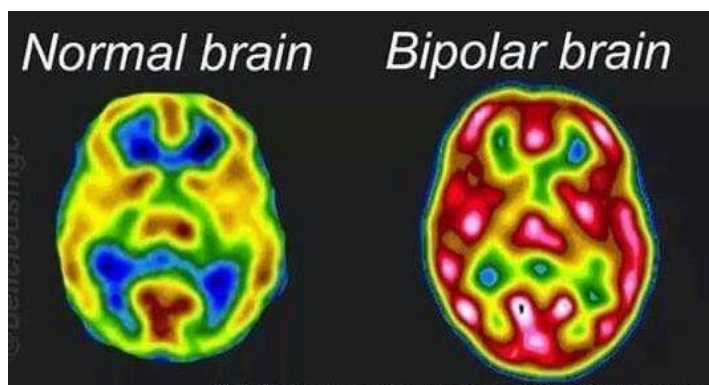
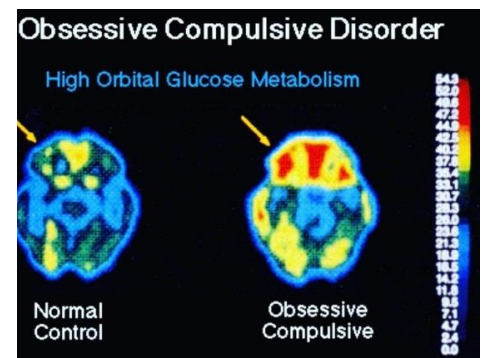


The brain is one of the largest and most complex organs in the human body. It is made up of more than 100 billion nerves that communicate in trillions of connections called synapses.

The Basics of Brain Function

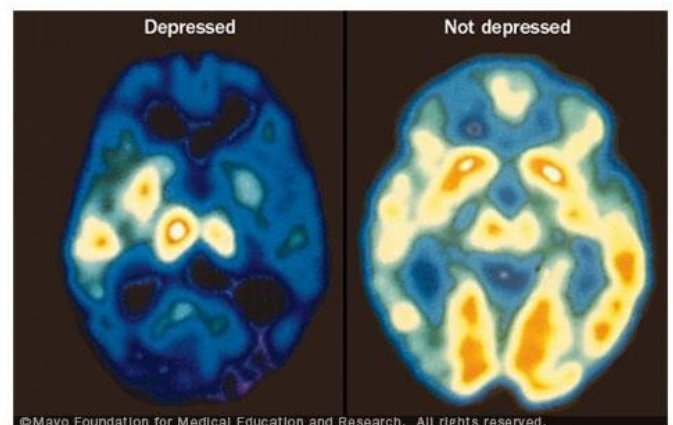
Before thinking about the problems that occur in the brain when someone has a mental illness, it is helpful to think about how the brain functions normally. The brain is an incredibly complex organ. It makes up only 2 percent of our body weight, but it consumes 20 percent of the oxygen we breathe and 20 percent of the energy we take in. It controls virtually everything we as humans experience, including movement, sensing our environment, regulating our involuntary body processes such as breathing, and controlling our emotions. Hundreds of thousands of chemical reactions occur every second in the brain; those reactions underlie the thoughts, actions, and behaviors with which we respond to environmental stimuli. In short, the brain dictates the internal processes and behaviors that allow us to survive.

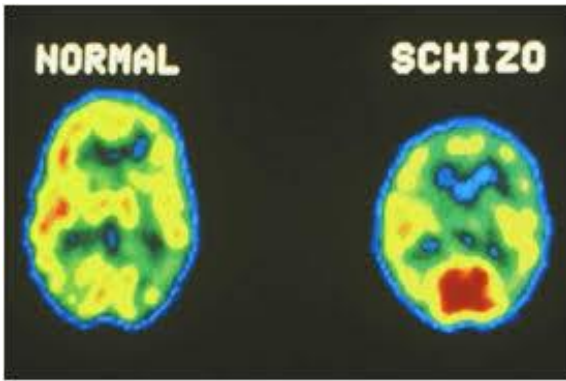
OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) is a brain and behavior disorder categorized as an anxiety disorder in the DSM-IV. OCD causes severe anxiety in those affected and involves both obsessions and compulsions that interfere with daily life. People with the brain disorder struggle greatly with recurrent, intrusive thoughts (obsessions) and unwanted urges to repeat safety-seeking behaviors over and over again (compulsions). Common examples are exaggerated fears of contamination or causing injury – leading to excessive washing or checking. It is easy to see why that causes extreme distress and interferes with everyday life.



Bipolar disorder also known as manic-depressive illness, is a brain disorder that causes unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, and the ability to carry out day-to-day tasks. There are four basic types of bipolar disorder; all of them involve clear changes in mood, energy, and activity levels.

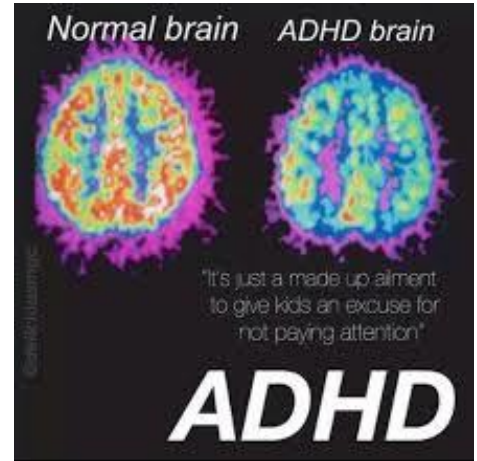
Depression is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest. Also called major depressive disorder or clinical depression, it affects how you feel, think and behave and can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems. You may have trouble doing normal day-to-day activities, and sometimes you may feel as if life isn't worth living.





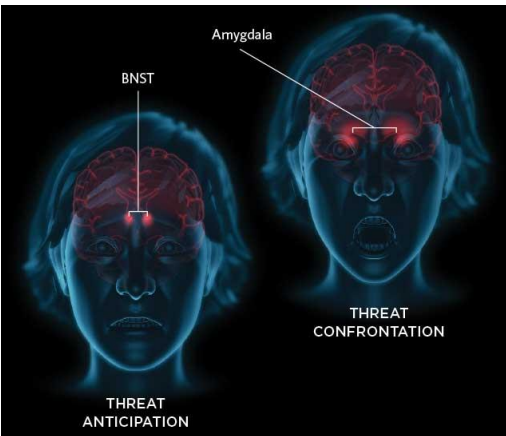
Schizophrenia is a serious mental illness that interferes with a person's ability to think clearly, manage emotions, make decisions and relate to others. It is a complex, long-term medical illness. Symptoms include: Hallucinations, which can include a person hearing voices, seeing things, or smelling things others can't perceive. Delusions, which are false beliefs that don't change even when the person who holds them is presented with new ideas or facts. Disorganized thinking such as struggling to remember things, organize thoughts or complete tasks. Anosognosia, which means they are unaware that they have an illness. Negative symptoms, such as being emotionally flat or speaking in a dull, disconnected way.

ADHD is a chronic condition marked by persistent inattention, hyperactivity, and sometimes impulsivity. ADHD begins in childhood and often lasts into adulthood. As many as 2 out of every 3 children with ADHD continue to have symptoms as adults. Symptoms of ADHD can differ from person to person, but there are three basic types of ADHD. Each one is identified by the symptoms of hyperactivity, impulsivity, and inattention. When the main symptoms are inattention, distraction, and disorganization, the type is usually called primarily inattentive. The symptoms of hyperactivity and possibly impulsiveness appear to diminish with age but are seen in the primarily hyperactive/impulsive type. The third type has some symptoms from each of the other two and is called the combined type.



How Anxiety Disorders Affect Your Brain

Anxiety is a normal reaction to stress and can be beneficial in some situations. It can alert us to dangers and help us prepare and pay attention. Anxiety disorders differ from normal feelings of nervousness or anxiousness, and involve excessive fear or anxiety. They are the most common of mental disorders and affect nearly 30 percent of adults at some point in their lives. But anxiety disorders are treatable and a number of effective treatments are available. Anxiety refers to anticipation of a future concern and is more associated with muscle tension and avoidance behavior.



In general, for a person to be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, the fear or anxiety must:

- (1) Be out of proportion to the situation or age inappropriate
- (2) Hinder your ability to function normally

There are several types of anxiety disorders, including generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, specific phobias, agoraphobia, social anxiety disorder and separation anxiety disorder.

