

Brief Psychotic Disorder: Understanding Sudden Reality Shifts

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Brief psychotic disorder is a period of psychosis whose duration is generally shorter, non-recurring, and not better accounted for by another condition.

The disorder is characterized by a sudden onset of psychotic symptoms, which may include delusions, hallucinations, disorganized speech or behavior, or catatonic behavior. The symptoms must not be better accounted for by schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, delusional disorder or mania in bipolar disorder. They must also not be caused by a drug (such as amphetamines) or medical condition (such as a brain tumor).

Symptoms generally last at least a day, but not more than a month, and there is an eventual return to full baseline functioning. It may occur in response to a significant stressor in a person's life, or in other situations where a stressor is not apparent, including in the weeks following birth. In diagnosis, a careful distinction is considered for culturally appropriate behaviors, such as religious beliefs and activities. It is believed to be connected to or synonymous with a variety of culture-specific phenomena such as latah, koro, and amok.

Frequency

The condition is considered uncommon in the United States, and is 10 times more frequent in developing countries. Internationally, it occurs twice as often in women than men, and even more often in women in the United States. It typically occurs in the late 30s and early 40s.