

# Recognizing Psychosis and Autism Spectrum Disorder

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# What is Psychosis??

- A condition that affect the way your brain processes information
- Hallucinations
- Delusions
- Disorganized thinking
- 1 in 13 people will experience a psychotic episode before the age of 75 (World Health Organization)

# Hallucinations

Auditory: Hearing sounds, voices, etc.

Visual: Seeing things

Tactile: Feeling things such as bugs on skin (frequent with alcohol withdrawal)

Olfactory: Smelling things (suspect brain problem)

Gustatory: Taste

# Delusions

- False beliefs despite **all** facts to the contrary
- Types
  - Paranoid or Persecutory: belief of being mistreated, followed, spied on, or planning to harm them or a loved one.
  - Grandiose: over-inflated sense of self-worth, power, knowledge, identity
  - Somatic: belief they have a medical condition or disorder or defect
  - Erotomanic: believes that another person, often someone famous or important, is in love with him or her. (Stalking behavior)
  - Jealous: partner is unfaithful

# Disorganized Thought Processes

- Easily distracted
- Thought may come and go rapidly
- Clang associations: rhyming or pun associations
- Never get to the point (Circumstantial)
- Jumping from topic to topic (Tangential)
  - For example start out talking about a rabbit, to their hair, to your suit

# Causes of Psychosis

## Psychiatric illnesses

- Schizophrenia
- Schizoaffective
- Bipolar
- Depression
- Drugs and Alcohol

## Medical Conditions

- Infections
- Prescribed Medications
- Electrolyte Imbalances
- Brain Tumors/Head Injuries
- Blood Sugar abnormality
- Dementias
- Parkinson's Disease
- Many other medical conditions

# Signs during your interactions

- Problems with providing a basic history in a logical order
- Long pauses after you ask a question
- Answers do not seem to be in response to your ???s
- Mumbling
- Reporting unusual events or situations that are not consistent with what you know for the environment\*\*\*\*
- Seem to be looking at something you are not seeing, looking over your shoulder, looking behind them
- Accusing you of saying something you did not say

# Questions you may ask

- Do you ever hear things that others say they don't? Sounds, voices etc.?
- Do you ever have arguments or get mad at people for saying things that they deny saying?
- Do you ever see things that others say they don't see?
- Do you ever see shadows or movement and when you look, you don't see anything?
- If they have any of the above (auditory or visual): Does it bother you when you see \_\_\_\_\_ or hear \_\_\_\_\_?

# More questions

- Tell them that you are their attorney?
- Ask them to explain what an attorney does.
- Determine if they understand your role (many think that you will tell what you know to the prosecution/government)
- How far did they go in school?
- Learning Disorders? Have them read at least a paragraph of consent form out loud.
- Prior psychiatric history?

???????

- ARE THE DELUSIONS OR HALLUCINATIONS RELATED TO THE CRIME, PLEA, ETC
- ARE THEY TAKING THEIR MEDICATIONS
- ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT IN JAIL
- SUICIDE RISKS-DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK

# AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

- A COMPLEX DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDER THAT IMPAIRS THE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE AND INTERACT
  - RANGE AND SEVERITY CAN VARY WIDELY

- SOCIAL COMMUNICATION DEFICITS MAY INCLUDE:
  - DIFFICULTY APPRECIATING THEIR OWN AND OTHER'S EMOTIONS
  - AVERSION TO EYE CONTACT\*\*\*\*\*
  - STILTED OR SCRIPTED SPEECH
  - INTERPRETING ABSTRACT IDEAS LITERALLY

# BEHAVIORS

- INFLEXIBILITY OF BEHAVIOR, EXTREME DIFFICULTY COPING WITH CHANGE
- DIFFICULTY TOLERATING CHANGES IN ROUTINE AND NEW EXPERIENCES
- SENSORY HYPERSENSITIVITY
- STEROTYPICAL MOVEMENTS SUCH AS ROCKING, HAND FLAPPING

WE PROVIDE PEOPLE WHO ARE PARALYZED  
WITH WHEELCHAIRS, WE DON'T DRAG THEM  
INTO COURT ON THEIR BACKS.

AUTISM AND OTHER MENTAL DISORDERS  
ARE REAL!!!!!!

# THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- MIRANDA POTENTIALLY NEEDS TO BE EXPLAINED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS DIFFERENTLY IF THEY ARE TO HAVE THE ABILITY TO WAIVE
- INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM MAY NEED ACCOMODATIONS IN COURT
  - HOW THEY ARE TRANSPORTED
  - SOUNDS
  - EXPLAINING TO THE JURY OR JUDGE THE BEHAVIOR
  - MAY NOT RESPOND TO VERBAL INSTRUCTION
  - ONLY REPEAT WHAT IS SAID TO THEM
  - HIGHER CHANCE OF FALSE CONFESSION

# MORE THINGS

- MAY SAY “NO” TO ALL QUESTIONS
- APPEAR TO BE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF DRUGS
- REVERSE PRONOUNS (“CAN I STOP?” VERSUS “CAN YOU STOP”)
- MAY BE TOO HONEST
- MAY NOT HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM
- MISLEADING LEVEL OF FUNCTIONING BECAUSE OF SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE ON A SINGLE SUBJECT

# WE NEED TO DO BETTER

- INDIVIDUALS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS AND AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE VICTIMS OF CRIME THAN PERPETRATORS
- MENTAL ILLNESS AND AUTISM DOES NOT MEAN A PERSON IS NOT COMPETENT, IT DOES MEAN WE NEED TO ASSESS OUR APPROACH
- INVOLVE FAMILY OR A PERSON THAT IS CLOSE TO THEM