
Hallucination

A hallucination is the experience of hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling, or feeling something when there is no stimulus (nothing happening) in the environment that others can identify.

Delusion

A delusion is a false belief that is held in spite of evidence to the contrary. A person with a delusion cannot be convinced that the delusion is not real. Common delusions experienced by people with psychotic disorders include the following:

- Control: Feelings, impulses, thoughts, or actions that are believed by the person to be under the control of some external force.
- Erotomania: Another person, usually someone of higher status, is believed to be in love with the person.
- Grandiosity: The person expresses inflated worth, power, knowledge, or identity or a special relationship to a deity or famous person.
- Jealousy: The person believes that his or her sexual partner is unfaithful.
- Persecution: The person believes that he or she (or someone close to him or her) is being attacked, harassed, cheated, persecuted, or plotted against.
- Reference: Events, objects, or other people in one's immediate environment have a particular and unusual significance (e.g., the person believes that a book is referring to him or her).
- Somatic: The person thinks that he or she has a physical defect or medical condition.
- Thought broadcasting: The individual believes that his or her thoughts are being broadcast out loud so that others can hear them.
- Thought insertion: The person believes that someone else's thoughts have been inserted into his or her mind.

Disorganized or catatonic behavior

Disorganized behavior^a includes

- Childlike silliness
- Unpredictable and untriggered agitation
- Disheveled or unusual dress
- Inappropriate sexual behavior
- Difficulty engaging in goal-directed behavior (e.g., activities of daily living)

Catatonic behavior^b includes

- Immobility or extreme resistance to movement
- Purposeless agitation
- Mutism (not speaking)
- Echolalia (echoing what other people say)
- Posturing
- Stereotyped movement or imitation of others' movements

Disorganized speech

Disorganized speech reflects deterioration in the ability to communicate. Assessment of people with developmental disabilities depends on reliable information from other sources comparing communication across time. In the general population, disorganized speech may be diagnosed in the following cases:

- Speech moves from one topic to another.
- Answers are poorly or completely unrelated to questions asked.
- Speech is difficult to follow and jumbled ("word salad").

Negative signs or symptoms

- Lack of affect (affective flattening): Face appears immobile and unresponsive; the person has poor eye contact; the person has reduced body language most of the time.
- Decreased speech (alogia): The person shows decreased productivity and fluency of speech or poverty of speech characterized by brief or empty replies.
- Decreased motivation (avolition): The person appears unable to start and work on goal-directed activities.

Source: American Psychiatric Association, 2000.

Note: The signs and symptoms described in this table are not specific to people with developmental disabilities and also appear in the general population.

^aDoes not include understandable, aimless, or delusional behavior and does represent a change from typical functioning.

^bDoes not include behavior that stems from autism or other developmental disability and does represent a change in behavior.