

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Mental Ill Health

This is a huge topic and a complex one. It is also important to remember that our mental health system can be racist and culturally specific. Misdiagnosis can be made at any level in the system and labels themselves change over time. What it can mean:

It can mean that your birth mummy/daddy is not very well. Even though there is no part of their body that hurts or looks painful they do not feel happy about their life. Sometimes because of this they can seem strange to other people and it can be hard for them to keep up jobs and to look after children or to look after themselves. They may behave differently to usual if they become mentally ill.

Anxiety:

Irritability

Tension in body and face

Worry

Panic attacks are part of anxiety

Heart beating fast, shortness of breath, racing thoughts.

Your birth mummy used to get anxious. That means she used to feel very frightened all the time. Check out that the child understands the meaning of nervous and explain that everyone feels nervous sometimes. The trouble with her nervousness was that it stopped her from doing lots of things that children need their mummies to do. She did not want to talk to people. She did not want to visit playgrounds and parks. She did not want to go outside.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder can be part of an anxiety state.

Bi Polar Disorder [Manic Depression]

This has the symptoms of depression but it also contains highs where the person affected feels they are out of harms way. People can feel they don't need to sleep or eat. They can be very creative- write or paint for hours on end. However it doesn't last. Sometimes they lose touch and think they don't need to be careful- can cross roads dangerously or they may not be able to pick up on other people's needs and children's needs.

This is usually a life long condition that needs medication to control.

This illness meant that your birth mummy could be very excited and full of energy all the time. She may not have thought she needed to sleep. She may not have been able to look after you properly because of all the important things she had to do. Usually the things your birth mummy wanted to do were not really

important but her illness made them seem important to her. At other times your birth mummy would feel very fed up and sad.

You can use the explanations of depression on earlier section.

The important thing for a child when their mummy/daddy can be so different at different times is that it can be frightening and dangerous for the child to live with their parent when they are either very happy or very sad. You did not know what was going to happen next. You wondered whether your birth mummy would realise you needed to go to school or if she did whether she was going to shout at all the teachers or not. There would be a lot for you to worry about.

Depression

It can mean quiet/silence. Remember that everybody is quiet sometimes when you explain this aspect. A depressed person may stare blankly at things and not 'see' them e.g. the TV.

Someone may be in his or her own world of negative thoughts and out of touch with what's around them. These thoughts could be sad or angry ones that might be turned in on the person thinking them gathering force in their intensity.

A depressed parent may have an inability to respond to or engage in a child's world. There may be an inability to feel positive emotion and they might be unable to show affection.

Depression may lead to a failure in initiating activity e.g. helping the child with homework or inviting friends round or deciding to go to park/play centre. Depression can be temporary and can be relieved by therapy or course of anti depressants.

Depression is something that grown ups can get. People who are depressed often feel sad about their life and don't have any energy. It can make people not want to get up in the mornings and not see the point in doing anything. Sometimes it stops people from wanting to talk to other people because they feel too sad to bother. It is nobody's fault but it is like an illness that just seems to happen to some people. There are many different reasons for it happening which the doctors who have seen your birth mummy/daddy understand best. Depression does not always last for ever and people can get better from it.

Personality Disorder

In psychiatry this is a disorder characterised by disruption in relatedness. It is manifested in any of a large group of mental disorders characterised by rigid, inflexible, and maladaptive behaviour patterns and traits that impair a person's ability to function in society by severely limiting adaptive potential. Some kinds of personality disorders are antisocial, borderline, and passive aggressive.

A personality disorder:

Does not react easily to treatment

Usually involves anti social ways of relating

Unlikely to change.

Explanations of this condition to the child should describe the specific symptoms and ways of relating to the child that meant the child came into care. It can be said that unfortunately the birth parent isn't going to get better. A personality disorder is not hereditary. Why it happens is not properly understood but early trauma features highly in those with borderline personality disorders.

Your birth Mummy/Daddy finds making friends and being nice to people very difficult. It is hard to bring up children when you don't get on with anybody. She was not able to change as this was the only way she knew how to be. All mummies need other people around to help them if they are going to look after their children properly and make the children feel alright about life.

Schizophrenia

Seeing and hearing things that are not there. Very frightening. Voices telling you to do things. A sense of a radio in head or God.

These symptoms can go if people take the right medication. However sometimes they don't like the side effects. Side effects can be sleepiness, weight gain, feeling they have lost the spark that makes them who they are.

This is a life long condition that needs medication to control. According to the National Institute of Clinical Excellence it affects one in one hundred people.

Schizophrenia is a word that describes people who are not well in their thinking and feelings. It is an illness that can be treated with taking medicine but when the person stops taking the medicine it comes back again. Someone with this illness can hear and see things that are not there and that nobody else can hear or see. It can be very frightening like having a radio in your head with voices that are not your own.

Your birth mummy was not well and she had this illness. She did not like the way the pills for the illness made her feel. She stopped taking the pills and then the illness made her think that she did not need them anymore. Sometimes when people have this illness they can think they have special powers and this can make them dangerous to themselves and other people.

Someone who was ill might think that they did not need to wear shoes because the voices said that their feet were now made of concrete and could not be run over or hurt. Or they might think that the bus driver was about to hurt them so that could make them try to fight him off the bus. What the voices tell them is not the truth.

It is frightening for children when their birth mummy or daddy has this illness as it means they can't look after them properly and keep them safe. The child might end up believing that the things their birth mummy or daddy is telling them are true. For example you might believe you are really bad if you were told this or that you

could fly because your parent told you it was true. Sometimes children get hurt who have mummies or daddies with this illness.

DIFFICULT STORIES

Anxiety Alcoholism Death Domestic Violence Drug Abuse Emotional Abuse Learning Difficulties/Disabilities Manic Depression-Bi Polar Disorder Mental Ill Health Neglect Non Accidental Injury Personality Disorder Rape Schizophrenia Suicide Sexual Abuse-context sex and sexual awareness Unknown Fathers

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