

*Working since
1973 helping people
with mental illnesses
rebuild their lives.*

Laurel Hill Center's FAQs about Mental Illness

Circle whether you think the following statements about mental illness are True or False.

1. T F Mental illness is common.
2. T F Mental illness is hereditary.
3. T F Mental illness and mental retardation are the same.
4. T F Schizophrenia means split personality marked by violent outbursts.
5. T F When a person with a mental illness has increased symptoms, hospitalization is the preferred treatment.
6. T F The biggest obstacle to improved functioning or recovery for people with mental illness is stigma.

Answers are inside.



2145 Centennial Plaza, Eugene, Oregon 97401

Tel: (541) 485-6340 **Fax:** (541) 984-3124 **TTY:** (541) 684-6822

Email: info@laurel.org **Website:** www.laurel.org

Answers to FAQs about Mental Illness

1. **True.** Mental illness is more widespread than cancer, lung disease and heart disease combined.
2. **False.** Mental illness can strike anyone – even a family that has never had another member with a similar illness. However, many researchers believe some individuals inherit a genetic “predisposition” to certain mental illnesses (including schizophrenia, depression and bipolar disorder).
3. **False.** A person with mental retardation has below average intellectual and adaptive skills. Intelligence is unrelated to mental illness, which affects emotions and thinking. John Nash, for example, was a genius mathematician who won the Nobel Prize despite having schizophrenia.
4. **False.** “Split personality” is a slang expression for multiple personality disorder, a rare condition in which a person adopts two or more personalities. Schizophrenia is a thought disorder, caused by chemical imbalances in the brain and often associated with delusions, hallucinations and illogical thinking. However, people with schizophrenia are not prone to violence (although 61% of Americans think so). They are more likely to be victims of violence. If they are violent, the violence is usually tied to substance abuse. With treatment, 50-60% of the most severely ill and disabled people with schizophrenia recover or improve significantly.
5. **False.** Hospitalization is required in only a small number of situations and is often brief, lasting only a few days or weeks. Evidence shows that offering a full range of community-based alternatives to people with mental illnesses is more effective than hospitalization and emergency room treatment.
6. **True.** The prejudice or stigma associated with mental illness makes it difficult for people to get help. Too many Americans are unaware that most people recover or significantly improve with treatment. As noted earlier, most people believe that individuals with schizophrenia are dangerous. As a result, people with mental illness often hide their symptoms until they become severe. They are reluctant to talk about troubling symptoms until more serious consequences occur (e.g., loss of employment and friends, report of strange behavior to the police). A survey of public attitudes toward people with disabilities found that mental illness, when compared with all other disabilities, caused the public the greatest unease.