



Consider Yourself Hugged

Basic Diagnostic Info — Mental Health Conditions

1. What Is a Mental Health Diagnosis?

- A diagnosis is a clinical label that helps professionals and individuals understand patterns of symptoms.
- It doesn't define you; it's a tool.
- Many mental illnesses involve a mix of biological, environmental, psychological factors. (NAMI) ([NAMI Santa Clara County](#))

2. Common Diagnoses & Key Features

Diagnosis	Some Core Symptoms / Features	What Makes It “Clinical” vs. “Normal” Variation
Major Depressive Disorder (Depression)	Persistent low mood, loss of interest, fatigue, sleep/appetite changes, thoughts of death	Impairs daily functioning; lasts ≥ 2 weeks (CDC)
Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)	Excessive worry across many domains, difficulty controlling worry, restlessness	Occurs more days than not; interferes with life
Social Anxiety Disorder	Fear of negative evaluation, avoidance of social situations	Impairs social/occupational life
Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)	Intrusive thoughts, urges, or repetitive behaviors to reduce distress	Causes distress or impairment
Bipolar Disorder	Mood episodes: depression + mania or hypomania	Clear mood shifts with functional impact

3. When to Consider Professional Help

- Symptoms interfere with daily life (work, relationships, self-care)
- Longer duration (weeks to months)
- Thoughts of self-harm or death
- Previously helpful coping no longer working

4. Screening Tools (for Reference / Self-Awareness, Not Diagnostic by Themselves)

- **PHQ-8 / PHQ-9** — common screening for depression ([APA](#))
- **GAD-7** — screening for generalized anxiety symptoms ([ADA](#))

5. Warning Signs / Red Flags

- Marked mood swings
- Withdrawal or isolation
- Changes in sleep, appetite, energy
- Difficulty concentrating
- Increased substance use
- Thoughts of self-harm / suicide ([NAMI](#))

6. Remember:

- A diagnosis is a **starting point**, not a full story.
- Two people with the same diagnosis can have very different experiences, needs, and paths.
- Compassion, respect, and individualized care matter more than “textbook” labels.
- Diagnosis + treatment + support = possibility of recovery or better quality of life.

7. Resources / References

- [NAMI](#): fact sheets, warning signs, affiliate networks
- [NIMH](#): depression overview
- [APA](#): depression treatment guideline
- [CDC](#): prevalence & reports
- [SAMHSA](#): toolkits & public health resources

**** This information is for educational and informational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional mental health care.**

If you or someone you know is struggling, please seek help from a qualified professional.

If you're in crisis, call or text **988** to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, or visit 988lifeline.org for chat and resources.