



Living with paranoia and fear

Communities in
Transition

BY

extern
CHANGING LIVES EVERY DAY

Oct 2020 www.extern.org

What does paranoia mean?

Paranoia is defined as an intense, irrational, persistent instinct or thought process of fearful feelings and thoughts. It does not always mean that there is an underlying health condition.

Other reasons for living with paranoia could be:

Intense fear – this may have been as a result of living with a traumatic experience – maybe you witnessed something, maybe someone has threatened you or your family and being so overwhelmed with fear can cause you to constantly worry about potential harm

Living on your own and being isolated

Problematic substance use – research would show that substance use can cause suspicion and fear which then increases the risk of living with paranoia on a regular basis

Low self-worth – Where you have no belief in yourself and suspect that others think and feel the same way about you.

Diagnosis of a mental health disorder – Anxiety, Depression, Psychosis, or Personality Disorders are a few examples

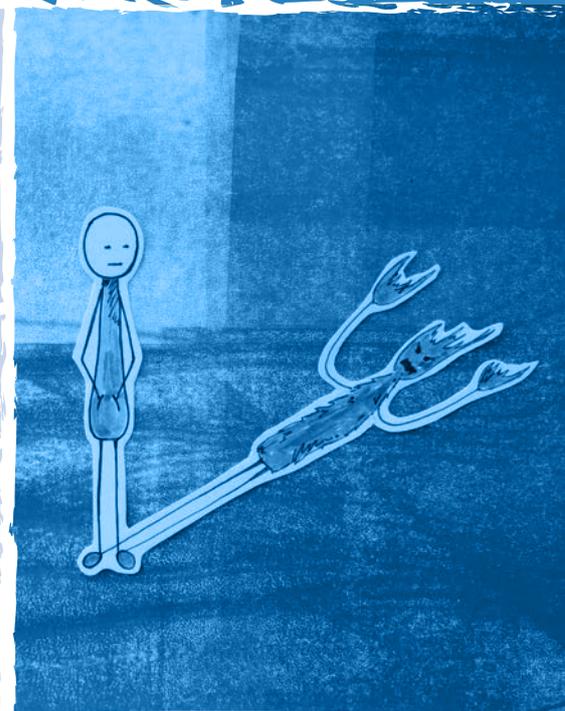
What impact does paranoia have on our lives?

Paranoia causes mistrust, and we can remain in a state of suspicion. This will not only have an impact on your psychological well-being but also your feelings, your thoughts, behaviours and your physical health.

Look at the following example:

If you think that you are being watched and that your life is under threat, this is going to cause higher levels of anxiety, increased levels of stress or worry and may cause you to avoid going out. This in turn can have an impact on your sleeping patterns and overall high risk impact on your general wellbeing and mental health.

Continuing to live like this can have long term effects on both your physical and mental health and we would encourage you to reach out for help.



What can stop you from reaching out for help?

- You are afraid to tell anyone what is going on and the reasons you are feeling this way
- You have been warned not to speak to anyone – living under threat
- You are afraid to leave your home due to threats
- You think you are being watched
- Maybe you are experiencing hallucinations – for example, hearing voices
- You don't know where to go for help

All of the above reasons to avoid seeking help can be fed by paranoia. Thankfully there is support out there for you to help you to overcome this.

Getting Help

Firstly, it may be worthwhile to chat with your GP to rule out any underlying health conditions. We would encourage you to write down how you are feeling, the symptoms, the frequency etc.

If you are using substances it would also be important to share this with your GP. Remember any information you share is treated as confidential amongst the professional support network. Your GP can refer you into other services, for example drug and alcohol support and/or psychiatric support.

Use voluntary services, or if you have access to the internet, Minding Your Head website or the here2help app can provide a list of services available to Northern Ireland. These can range from alcohol and drug support, to mental health services and victim support if needed.

Remember your local community policing service. If you are under threat they are here to help and protect you.

Sometimes it may be necessary for some people to move from an area. This can be a very distressing time, but the Housing Executive and police can support you with this.

Self-Help Tips

In addition to what is outlined above, there are things you can do to manage mood changes and to take care of yourself such as:

- Monitoring your mood, noticing any significant changes
- Developing a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP)
- Making time for yourself
- Taking up a hobby
- Developing a routine
- Trying mindfulness, relaxation or yoga
- Eating a balanced diet
- Exercising regularly
- Attending local support groups

Download self-help apps from Playstore including "Whats Up App" or "21 Days", both of which have fantastic self-help tips for moderating and regulating mood and emotions.



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Registered with the Charity Commission for
Northern Ireland NIC105869

Company Registration No: NI 16083

Tel: +44 (0)28 9084 0555

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