

Words Used	What does this mean
<b>Diagnosed/undiagnosed</b>	A mental illness is diagnosed by a mental health professional such as a psychiatrist, general practitioner or psychologist. A person with a diagnosed mental illness may be receiving treatment by a mental health professional, with specific therapy and/or medication.
<b>Unwell</b>	This is a term used when someone with mental illness is experiencing an episode of mental illness. Just as you would describe someone as having the flu and being unwell, this is the same for a person with mental illness. <i>'Martha has anxiety and is currently unwell.'</i>
<b>Episode / episodic or cyclic</b>	This describes the occurrence of a person's mental illness. The course of a person's mental illness may be described as being episodic or cyclic, meaning they have periods of wellness and short periods of being unwell. If a person becomes unwell you may describe this, for example: <i>'Bruce has diagnosed depression and is currently experiencing an episode.'</i>
<b>Acute or chronic</b>	This describes the extent of the symptoms being experienced by a person with mental illness. Acute mental illness is characterised by significant and distressing symptoms requiring immediate treatment. This may be the person's first experience of mental illness, a repeat episode or the worsening of symptoms of an often continuing mental illness. The onset is sudden or rapid and the symptoms usually respond to treatment. <sup>1</sup> Chronic mental illness is characterised as being long-lasting or recurrent. Just as you would describe someone as having chronic arthritis or a chronic back condition, this is the same for a person with mental illness. <i>'Anthea has chronic depression.'</i> <i>'James has acute anxiety.'</i>
<b>Treated / untreated</b>	A person with a diagnosed mental illness is being treated if they are receiving some type of treatment such as specific therapy and/or medication by a doctor. <i>'Tania has schizophrenia which is currently being treated by her doctor.'</i>

<sup>1</sup> Victorian Government Health Information (2008) [A Guide to Mental Health Terminology](#)