

# Symptoms: Quick Reference

Plain-English definitions for every symptoms term on Shrinktionary, in one printable sheet.

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**Please read**

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## Agitation

*Also: Psychomotor agitation*

Agitation is a state of inner restlessness and tension that often comes with increased movement, like pacing or fidgeting. It can be a symptom of many physical and mental health conditions.

## Alogia

*Also: Poverty of speech*

Alogia is a marked drop in the amount of speech a person produces. It's a negative symptom most often linked to schizophrenia, where answers become brief, sparse, and hard to draw out.

## Anhedonia

Anhedonia is the loss of pleasure or interest in things you used to enjoy. It's a core symptom of depression and shows up in several other conditions.

## Avoidance

*Also: Avoidant coping, Avoidant behavior*

Avoidance is steering clear of situations, places, people, or thoughts that feel frightening or distressing. It tends to bring quick relief but keeps fear alive over time, which is why it sits at the center of anxiety.

## Avolition

Avolition is a significant drop in the ability to start or sustain goal-directed activity. It's a symptom seen in conditions like schizophrenia and depression, not a diagnosis.

## Brain fog

*Also: Mental fog, Cognitive fog*

Brain fog is an everyday term for feeling mentally cloudy, with trouble concentrating, remembering, or thinking clearly. It's a symptom, not a diagnosis, and has many possible causes.

## Catatonia

Catatonia is a syndrome of marked changes in movement, speech, and responsiveness. It can occur with psychiatric and medical conditions and is treatable, often quickly.

## Compulsion

*Also: Compulsive behavior, Ritual*

A compulsion is a repetitive behavior or mental act a person feels driven to do in order to ease distress or prevent something bad from happening. Compulsions sit at the heart of obsessive-compulsive disorder.

## Delusion

*Also: Delusional belief*

A delusion is a fixed false belief that a person holds firmly even when there's clear evidence it isn't true. It's a core feature of psychosis.

## Depersonalization

*Also: Feeling detached from yourself*

Depersonalization is a feeling of being detached from yourself, as if you're watching your own thoughts, body, or actions from the outside. It's a common stress and anxiety reaction.

## Derealization

*Also: Feeling unreal, Dreamlike feeling*

Derealization is the sense that the world around you isn't quite real, as if you're seeing it through glass or in a dream. It's a form of dissociation and a common response to stress, anxiety, or trauma.

## Dissociation

*Also: Feeling detached, Depersonalization*

Dissociation is a sense of feeling detached from yourself, your body, or your surroundings, as if reality has gone foggy or unreal. It's a nervous-system response that ranges from brief and ordinary to a sign of a clinical condition.

## Emotional blunting

*Also: Emotional numbing, Blunted affect*

Emotional blunting is a flattening of feeling, where both highs and lows are muted and emotions feel muffled or far away. It can come from depression, trauma, or as a side effect of some medications.

## Emotional Numbness

*Also: Emotional blunting, Feeling emotionally flat*

Emotional numbness is a feeling of being emotionally flat, blank, or cut off from your feelings. It's common in depression, trauma, and high stress.

## Fatigue

*Also: Exhaustion, Low energy*

Fatigue is a deep, persistent tiredness or lack of energy that rest doesn't fully fix. It's a common symptom of many physical and mental health conditions, including depression.

## Flashback

*Also: Re-experiencing, Reliving*

A flashback is an involuntary, vivid re-experiencing of a traumatic event, where it feels like the past is happening again right now. Flashbacks are a hallmark feature of post-traumatic stress disorder.

## Flat Affect

*Also: Blunted affect, Affective flattening*

Flat affect is a marked reduction in outward emotional expression, such as a still face, flat voice, and little gesturing. It's a symptom seen in several conditions, not a diagnosis.

## Grandiosity

*Also: grandiose thinking*

Grandiosity is an inflated sense of one's own importance, power, or abilities. It's a common symptom in the mania of bipolar disorder.

## Hallucination

*Also: Sensory hallucination*

A hallucination is sensing something that isn't actually there, such as hearing voices or seeing things that other people don't. It can affect any of the senses.

## Hopelessness

*Also: feeling hopeless*

Hopelessness is the feeling that things won't improve and that the future holds nothing better. It's a common symptom of depression and can be a warning sign worth taking seriously.

## Hyperarousal

*Also: Hyperarousal state*

Hyperarousal is a state of being constantly keyed up and on guard, as if danger is always near. It's a core feature of PTSD and shows up in anxiety, with a body stuck in a threat-ready mode.

## Hypersomnia

*Also: excessive sleepiness, oversleeping*

Hypersomnia is excessive sleepiness, including sleeping much longer than usual or feeling unrefreshed despite plenty of sleep. It can be a symptom of depression and other conditions.

## Hyperventilation

*Also: Overbreathing*

Hyperventilation is breathing faster or deeper than the body needs, which lowers carbon dioxide in the blood and produces dizziness, tingling, and a sense of breathlessness. It's a common driver of panic symptoms.

## Hypomania

*Also: Hypomanic episode*

Hypomania is a milder, shorter form of mania, with elevated mood and energy that's noticeable but less severe. It's central to bipolar II disorder.

## Insomnia

*Also: Sleeplessness, Insomnia disorder*

Insomnia is ongoing trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or getting restful sleep, paired with daytime effects like fatigue or poor focus. It often travels alongside depression and anxiety, and it responds well to a focused therapy called CBT-I.

## Intrusive Thought

*Also: Unwanted thoughts*

An intrusive thought is an unwanted, often distressing thought or image that pops into your mind on its own. They're extremely common and don't reflect what you actually want or intend to do.

## Irritability

*Also: Irritable mood*

Irritability is a heightened tendency to feel annoyed, impatient, or quick to anger over small things. It's a common symptom across many physical and mental health conditions.

## Low self-esteem

*Also: poor self-esteem*

Low self-esteem is a persistently negative view of one's own worth and abilities. It isn't a diagnosis on its own, but it often travels with anxiety and depression.

## Mania

*Also: Manic episode*

Mania is a distinct period of abnormally elevated, expansive, or irritable mood along with high energy. It's a hallmark of bipolar I disorder.

## Panic attack

A panic attack is a sudden surge of intense fear or discomfort that peaks within minutes and includes strong physical symptoms. It's not dangerous, even though it can feel like it is.

## Paranoia

*Also: Paranoid thinking*

Paranoia is intense, unfounded distrust or suspicion of others, like a belief that people are watching, plotting, or out to cause harm without real evidence.

## Pressured speech

*Also: Pressure of speech*

Pressured speech is rapid, hard-to-interrupt talking that seems driven by an inner urgency. It's a classic feature of mania and hypomania, and it can also appear with severe anxiety or agitation.

## Psychomotor agitation

*Also: Psychomotor restlessness*

Psychomotor agitation is restless physical movement driven by inner tension, like pacing, fidgeting, or hand-wringing. It shows up in depression, mania, anxiety, and other states of heightened distress.

## Psychomotor retardation

*Also: psychomotor slowing*

Psychomotor retardation is a visible slowing of movement, speech, and thinking. It's a recognized symptom of depression and some other conditions.

## Racing thoughts

*Also: racing mind*

Racing thoughts are fast, hard-to-stop streams of ideas that jump from one topic to the next. They're a common symptom in anxiety, mania, and high-stress states.

## Rumination

Rumination is repeated, looping thinking about the same concern, memory, or fear without reaching resolution. It feels like problem-solving but doesn't produce solutions.

## Self-Harm

*Also: Self-injury, Non-suicidal self-injury*

Self-harm is deliberately hurting your own body as a way to cope with overwhelming emotional pain or distress. If you're struggling, support is available right now.

## Sensory overload

*Also: Sensory overwhelm*

Sensory overload is when input from the senses overwhelms the brain's ability to process it, leading to distress, shutdown, or the need to escape. It's common in autism, ADHD, anxiety, and PTSD.

## Social withdrawal

*Also: social isolation, withdrawing socially*

Social withdrawal is pulling back from contact with other people. It's a common symptom across depression, anxiety, and several other conditions.

## Suicidal Ideation

*Also: Suicidal thoughts, Thoughts of suicide*

Suicidal ideation means having thoughts about death or about ending your own life, ranging from passive wishes to active planning. These thoughts are more common than most people realize, they are treatable, and they are a reason to reach out for support.

## Worthlessness

*Also: feeling worthless*

Worthlessness is the feeling of having little or no value as a person. It's a common symptom of depression and one that deserves to be taken seriously.

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