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Information & Support



May 2023



DR GOOGLE – DON'T DIAGNOSE YOURSELF

Easy access to online resources means that we 'google' almost everything. While the speed of finding information is a great advantage, in some respects it can work against us. One such area is the health sphere. Searching for health symptoms may seem like a tempting idea, but it is worth refraining from doing so.

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE ONLINE SPACE

The internet has become very popular in a short period of time, and the availability of information and entertainment on social networks further influences the increasing interest in the content presented there. On the web, we can easily find profiles dedicated to mental health and issues in the field of psychology and psychiatry. The algorithms of portals such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok allow creators to reach many millions of people, even those who are not considering improving their mental health. Hashtags such as #mentalhealth have been created, under which we can find a collection of graphics, photos and educational videos on issues such as depressive disorders, anxiety and stress management.

Mental health issues are no longer taboo, allowing people to become accustomed to the various symptoms, showing that it is not something to be ashamed of, that it is worth seeking help. However, the availability of educational content from psychologists, psychiatrists and psychotherapists also poses some risks that we should be aware of...

THE INTERNET AS A SOURCE OF MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE?

Australian researchers at Edith Cowan University in Perth looked at thirty-six free websites and apps to check the symptoms present for a quick 'diagnosis'. Just over one third of the services gave the correct diagnosis as the first option. About half of them as the third option. The average correct answers ranged from 12 to 61%. This means that getting a good online 'diagnosis' is difficult and even depends on chance.

The same is true for mental health, as symptoms can be very confusing. Self-diagnosing mental health (one's own or others') often 'shallows' the problem, downplays it, and we – whether consciously or not – give hurtful labels. The Internet can help us name the symptoms and also signal the need for actual help from a specialist. However, it is very important to use verified sources.



EAP E-MAIL

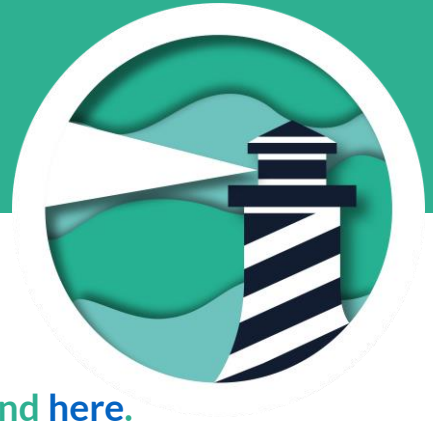


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A proven mental health self-diagnosis tool can be found [here](#).
Remember that it is not a substitute for seeing a specialist!

BEWARE OF ONLINE DIAGNOSES

Self-diagnosing yourself using online resources is, to put it mildly, not the best idea. Why?

1. A reliable medical diagnosis can only be made by a psychiatrist after taking an in-depth history and conducting an examination.
2. Not all the people creating psychological educational materials in the net are qualified to do so.
3. Our psychological vocabulary is expanding (which is good!), but the risk of giving inadequate labels is also increasing. For example, we will define a difficult boss as a person with narcissistic disorder, even though examinations and complex psychological tests are required for such a diagnosis.
4. Online resources are no substitute for real psychotherapy, during which the therapeutic alliance necessary to make good changes in life is established.
5. Some people may not seek ways to improve their mental health due to the misconception that they can help themselves solely with resources found online.
6. There is a risk that people will use too general information for self-diagnosis, which may cause them to perceive even normal symptoms as symptoms of a disorder.
7. Through misdiagnosis, clinically relevant symptoms can be missed leading to unsuccessful attempts to improve one's wellbeing. Specialist treatment planned by a doctor would be a much better choice.
8. Mental disorders and illnesses are complex phenomena influenced by many factors. You cannot become an expert at diagnosing them after one training/webinar – this is where medical training and years of practice and experience of seeing patients comes into play.

The Internet, despite its educational value, is not a good source for self-diagnosis of mental health. Online resources can help us name the symptoms that occur, but nothing can replace a professional diagnosis by a psychiatric specialist.

*Don't wait, call now! If you feel you have a mental health problem, contact a specialist.
We are here to support you!*