

# How do patients diagnosed with schizophrenia communicate?

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Negative emotional facial expressions dominate in the interplay with patients diagnosed with schizophrenia. This has been shown in previous research and has now been confirmed in a dissertation from the Department of Psychology, Stockholm University, in Sweden. The dissertation is based on video-recorded clinical interviews carried out by psychologists.

The dissertation shows that expressions of negative feelings, such as disgust and contempt, are the most common ones in the patients' facial expressions.

“One might speculate about what this is due to. It might be an expression of low self-esteem in the patients, possibly an expression of self-contempt so to speak,” says Helena Fatouros Bergman.

A new research finding in the dissertation is that these negative emotional expressions appear to be relatively stable across repeated interviews. The patients also seem to give expression to similar negative emotions regardless of who is interviewing them.

Previous research that has dealt with everyday conversations with non-professionals has shown that the patients avoid to express negative feelings during mutual gaze.

“Perhaps patients unconsciously do not wish to expose these negative emotions to their interlocutors” says Helena Fatouros Bergman.

On the other hand, this was not the case in a clinical context. In the interviews the patients showed negative emotional facial expressions while maintaining eye contact with the interviewer. This indicates that patients in a clinical interview situation seem to be more willing to communicate negative feelings to a psychologist.

“The dissertation thus shows that the emotional interplay with this patient group needs to receive more attention. Moreover, following up the emotional content in the patients utterances proved to be of importance for the establishment of well-functioning communication with these patients,” says Helena Fatouros Bergman.

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