Psychosis vs. paranoia

These are two mental health-related terms that, to an expert in this field, mean two completely different things. But in reality, psychosis and paranoia do have some similarities. Psychosis is a state of mind where the individual cannot tell reality from fantasy. A psychotic person suffers from a chemical imbalance in the brain, or even the brain structure itself.

Psychosis has two classic symptoms: delusions are thoughts that have no basis in reality. For example, I might have the delusion that Johnny Depp is madly in love with me, and nothing can convince me otherwise. In addition to delusions, psychotic people have hallucinations; seeing, hearing, smelling or feeling things that aren't there. I might have the hallucination that Johnny Depp is on the radio, talking directly to me. Since neither of these things are true, I would be out of touch with reality.

Paranoid people believe, despite all evidence to the contrary, that someone or several people are purposely doing things to harm or irritate them. Intense paranoia can be a symptom of a psychotic delusion e.g. I believe that Johnny Depp is conspiring to harm me in some way. Paranoid symptoms are also part of the Paranoid Personality Disorder, which is NOT psychosis., but rather a very strange personality trait. (apologies to Mr. Depp)