

HOW TO SPOT THE SIGNS OF MENTAL HEALTH

Many people struggle to cope at one point or another of their lives. Reaching out to someone could help them know that someone cares, that they are valued, and help them access the support they need.

Everyone copes and reacts in their own way, but here are some general signs to look out for. For some people, several of these signs might apply - for others just one or two, or none.

Signs to look out for

- Feeling restless and agitated
- Feeling angry and aggressive
- Feeling tearful
- Being tired or lacking in energy
- Not wanting to talk to or be with people
- Not wanting to do things they usually enjoy
- Using alcohol or drugs to cope with feelings
- Finding it hard to cope with everyday things
- Not replying to messages or being distant
- Talking about feeling hopeless, helpless or worthless
- Talking about feeling trapped by life circumstances they can't see a way out of, or feeling unable to escape their thoughts
- A change in routine, such as sleeping or eating more or less than normal
- Engaging in risk-taking behaviour, like gambling or violence

You might not always be able to spot these signs. These emotions may be more difficult to spot if you're seeing less of the people, you're close to.

Situations to look out for

- loss, including loss of a friend or a family member through bereavement
- suicide or attempted suicide of family member, friend or public figure
- relationship and family problems
- housing problems
- financial worries
- job-related stress
- college or study-related pressures
- bullying, abuse or neglect
- loneliness and isolation
- challenging current events
- depression
- painful and/or disabling physical illness
- heavy use of or dependency on alcohol or other drugs

Again, these may not apply to everyone who is struggling, but they can be useful to look out for.

Common mental health problems

Some people may have more than one mental health problem (such as depression and anxiety). Here is a list of the more commonly found issues in the workplace:

Symptoms of depression

This is usually feelings of flatness or lowness, a lack of engagement with things they previously were engaged with and a loss of enjoyment of their hobbies. There will often be a change in appetite, and they will be more irritable.

Symptoms of generalised anxiety disorder

As a person with this condition will have constant worrying. Due to this, they are often on edge and irritable, restless, or tired because of being tense all day. Because they focus their mind on worrying, it is often hard for those with anxiety to concentrate on a topic or task.

Symptoms of panic disorder

Similar to generalised anxiety but the symptoms manifest far more so in physical ways. Unexpected and recurring panic attacks are common and worrying about having another panic attack. One symptom of a panic attack is an increased heart rate.

Symptoms of OCD

Those affected have obsessive thoughts that are difficult to get rid of. They manifest as strong feelings that the person must carry out or repeat certain physical acts or mental processes This can be fears of germs/dirt, worrying about the safety of things and obsession over the order/layout of things.

Symptoms of PTSD

This is a disorder that comes about after a traumatic event in someone's life. There may be a feeling of reliving the event through flashbacks or nightmares. There can also be physical reactions, such as shaking and sweating.

Support Networks and useful websites:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/>

<https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/>

You can also refer to the Blue Lion **Starting a conversation about mental health** factsheet

