

Warning Signs Handout

You can help yourself, your family, and your friends by knowing some warning signs that mean you need to seek help. If you see these signs in yourself, make an appointment with your doctor or a mental health provider.

If you see these signs in others, tell them you are concerned. Help them make an appointment to see their mental health provider and offer to bring them there.

Undue, Prolonged Anxiety

Anxiety may be more than you would expect, or without any known cause. A signal that help is needed would be having constant tension, fear, or panic, or going from one reason for anxiety to another.

Prolonged or Severe Depression

The “blues” is a natural reaction to life’s ups and downs. But depression causes ongoing changes in a person’s mood, behavior, and feelings. If you have several of these symptoms, you should see a mental health provider:

- Feeling sad or irritable; guilty, worthless, or hopeless
- Unable to concentrate, remember things, or make decisions
- Losing interest in activities once enjoyed
- Having changes in weight or appetite
- Changing sleeping patterns; being tired or low on energy
- Feeling restless, or sudden change in amount of activity (seen by others)
- Losing touch with reality
- Having thoughts of suicide or death

Sudden Changes in Mood or Behavior

Sudden changes may be serious if they are not meant for self-improvement, or if they involve a person’s normal habits or way of thinking. For example, a very careful person who suddenly begins gambling away lots of money may be having emotional problems.

Tension-Caused Physical Problems

Stress can cause headaches, nausea, or muscle spasms. These symptoms and the pain are very real. Medical tests can check if there are other causes. Distressing, physical symptoms that don’t go away should be checked by a doctor.

Adapted from *Mental Illness: Basic Facts*, Mental Health Association in Milwaukee County

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