

# Knowing When to Seek Treatment for Mental Health Disorders



Knowing when to seek treatment for mental health disorders is important for parents and families. Families, spouses, teachers, or friends are often the first to suspect that their loved one or their student is challenged by feelings, behaviors, or other conditions that cause them to act disruptive, rebellious, or sad. This may include:

- Problems with relationships with friends or family members
- Problems with work or school
- Sleep problems
- Changes in appetite
- Trouble expressing emotion
- Substance abuse
- Delays in development
- Trouble coping
- Inattentive

It's also important to know that people of different ages will show different symptoms and behaviors. Getting familiar with the common behaviors of children, teens, and adults that make it hard for them to adapt to situations will often help in identifying any problems early. It's important for families who suspect a problem in one or more of these areas to seek treatment as soon as possible. Treatment for mental health disorders is available and usually works well.

## What are the symptoms of a potential problem in a young child?

These are the most common symptoms of a possible emotional, behavioral, or developmental problem in a younger child. But each child may have different symptoms. Symptoms may include:

- Poor grades or a big drop in school performance. This can happen even though the child studies and tries hard to succeed.
- Withdrawal from activities, friends, or family
- Sleep disturbances like sleep terrors, nightmares, or insomnia
- Hyperactivity
- Constant or frequent aggression or "acting out" for longer than 6 months
- Constant or frequent rebellion; opposition to authority and direction for longer than 6 months
- Refusal to attend school on a regular or frequent basis
- Refusal to take part in school or family activities
- Excessive worry or anxiety
- Excessive, regular temper tantrums without cause

The symptoms of a possible emotional, behavioral, or developmental problem may look like other conditions. Always talk with your child's healthcare provider for a diagnosis. You can involve school staff for consistency

and support.

## What are the symptoms of a potential problem in a teen?

These are the most common symptoms of a possible emotional, behavioral, or developmental problem in a teenager that may lead to a mental health assessment. But each teen may have slightly different symptoms. Symptoms may include:

- Poor grades or a big drop in school performance. This can happen even though the teen studies and tries hard to succeed.
- Social withdrawal from activities, friends, and/or family
- Concern expressed by teachers, friends, or family about the teen's behavior
- Abuse of alcohol or drugs
- Sleep problems such as persistent night terrors, nightmares, insomnia, or hypersomnia
- Depression. This includes poor mood, negativity, and mood swings.
- Appetite changes such as refusal to eat, excessive eating, food rituals, bingeing, or purging
- Constant or frequent aggression or "acting out" for longer than 6 months
- Constant or frequent rebellion; opposition to authority and direction for longer than 6 months
- Constant or frequent anger for longer than 6 months
- Skipping school
- Refusal to take part in school, family, sport, or social activities
- Excessive worry and/or anxiety
- Self-injurious behaviors
- Threats to self or others
- Thoughts of death
- Thoughts or talk of suicide
- Running away or threatening to run away
- Destructive behaviors such as vandalism, or criminal activity
- Sexually "acting out"
- Lying or cheating
- Many physical complaints

The symptoms of a possible emotional, behavioral, or developmental problem may look like other conditions. Always talk with your teen's healthcare provider for a diagnosis. You can involve school staff for consistency and support.

## What are the symptoms of a potential problem in an adult?

These are the most common symptoms of a possible emotional, behavioral, or developmental problem in an adult. But each person may have different symptoms. Symptoms may include:

- Big drop in work performance, poor work attendance, or lack of productivity
- Social withdrawal from activities, friends, or family
- Abuse of alcohol or drugs
- Sleep problems such as persistent nightmares, insomnia, hypersomnia, or flashbacks
- Depression. This includes poor mood, negativity, or mood swings.
- Appetite changes such as losing or gaining a lot of weight
- Constant or frequent aggression
- Constant or frequent anger for longer than 6 months
- Excessive worry or anxiety
- Threats to self or others
- Thoughts of death
- Thoughts or talk of suicide
- Destructive behaviors such as criminal activity or stealing
- Sexually "acting out"
- Lying or cheating
- Many physical complaints, including being constantly tense or frequent aches and pains that can't be traced to a physical cause or injury
- Sudden feelings of panic, dizziness, or increased heartbeat
- Increased feelings of guilt, helplessness, or hopelessness
- Decreased energy

The symptoms of a possible emotional, behavioral, or developmental problem may look like other conditions. Always talk with your healthcare provider for a diagnosis.

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