

Knowing When to Seek Treatment



Knowing when to seek treatment for mental health disorders is important for parents and families. Many times, families, spouses, or friends are the first to suspect that their loved one is challenged by feelings, behaviors, and/or environmental conditions that cause them to act disruptive, rebellious, or sad. This may include, but is not limited to, problems with relationships with friends and/or family members, work, school, sleeping, eating, substance abuse, emotional expression, development, coping, attentiveness, and responsiveness. It's also important to know that people of different ages will exhibit different symptoms and behaviors. Familiarizing yourself with the common maladaptive behaviors of children, adolescents, and adults will often help to identify any problems early, in their most treatable state. 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.

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

The following are the most common symptoms of a potential emotional, behavioral, and/or developmental problem in the younger child, which necessitates a psychiatric evaluation. However, each child may experience symptoms differently. Symptoms may include:

- Significant decline in school performance or poor grades (even though the child studies and tries hard to succeed)
- Withdrawal from activities, friends, family
- Sleep disturbances (for example, night terrors, nightmares, insomnia, hypersomnia)
- Hyperactivity
- Continuous or frequent aggression or “acting out” (for periods longer than six months)
- Continuous or frequent rebellion; opposition to authority and direction (for periods longer than six months)
- Refusal to attend school on a regular or frequent basis
- Refusal to take part in school and/or family activities
- Excessive worry and/or anxiety
- Excessive, regular temper tantrums (without explanation)

The symptoms of a potential emotional, behavioral, and/or developmental problem may resemble other conditions. Always consult your child’s health care provider for a diagnosis.

What are the symptoms of a potential problem in an adolescent?

The following are the most common symptoms of a potential

emotional, behavioral, and/or developmental problem in the older, adolescent child, which necessitates a psychiatric evaluation. However, each adolescent may experience symptoms differently. Symptoms may include:

- Significant decline in school performance or poor grades (even though the child studies and tries hard to succeed)
- Social withdrawal from activities, friends, family
- Substance (alcohol and drugs) abuse
- Sleep disturbances (for example, persistent night terrors, nightmares, insomnia, hypersomnia)
- Depression (poor mood, negativity, mood swings)
- Appetite changes (such as, refusal to eat, excessive eating, food rituals, bingeing, purging)
- Continuous or frequent aggression or “acting out” (for periods longer than six months)
- Continuous or frequent rebellion; opposition to authority and direction (for periods longer than six months)
- Continuous or frequent anger (for periods longer than six months)
- Skipping school
- Refusal to take part in school, family, sport, and/or social activities
- Excessive worry and/or anxiety
- Self-injurious behaviors
- Threats to self or others
- Thoughts of death
- Thoughts and/or talk of suicide
- Running away or threatening to run away
- Destructive behaviors (for example, vandalism, criminal activity)
- Sexually “acting out”
- Lying and/or cheating
- Many physical complaints

The symptoms of a potential emotional, behavioral, and/or developmental problem may resemble other conditions. Always consult your adolescent's health care provider for a diagnosis.

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

The following are the most common symptoms of a potential emotional, behavioral, and/or developmental problem in an adult, which necessitates a psychiatric evaluation. However, each individual may experience symptoms differently. Symptoms may include:

- Significant decline in work performance, poor work attendance, and/or lack of productivity
- Social withdrawal from activities, friends, family
- Substance (alcohol and drugs) abuse
- Sleep disturbances (for example, persistent nightmares, insomnia, hypersomnia, flashbacks)
- Depression (poor mood, negativity, mood swings)
- Appetite changes (such as, significant weight gain or loss)
- Continuous or frequent aggression
- Continuous or frequent anger (for periods longer than six months)
- Excessive worry and/or anxiety
- Threats to self or others
- Thoughts of death
- Thoughts and/or talk of suicide
- Destructive behaviors (for example, criminal activity, stealing)
- Threats to self or others
- Thoughts of death
- Thoughts and/or talk of suicide
- Destructive behaviors (for example, vandalism, criminal activity)

- Sexually “acting out”
- Lying and/or cheating
- Many physical complaints, including being constantly tense and/or frequent aches and pains that cannot be traced to a physical cause or injury
- Sudden feelings of panic, dizziness, increased heartbeat
- Increased feelings of guilt, helplessness, and/or hopelessness
- Decreased energy

The symptoms of a potential emotional, behavioral, and/or developmental problem may resemble other conditions. Always consult your health care provider for a diagnosis.