

Learn the 5 Signs of Suffering

Nearly one in every five people, or 42.5 million American adults, has a diagnosable mental health condition, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Often our friends, co-workers, neighbors and family members are suffering emotionally and don't recognize the symptoms or won't ask for help. And sometimes we're the ones who are suffering and won't admit it.

Here are five signs that may mean you or someone you know might need help:

Their personality changes.

You may notice sudden or gradual changes in behavior. That can mean acting in ways that don't seem to fit the person's values, or the person may just seem different.

They seem uncharacteristically angry, anxious, agitated or moody.

You may notice more frequent problems controlling their temper or that they seem irritable or unable to calm down. People in more extreme situations of this kind may be unable to sleep or may explode in anger at a minor problem.

They withdraw or isolate themselves from other people.

Someone who used to be socially engaged may pull away from family and friends and stop taking part in activities he or she used to enjoy. In more severe cases, the person may start failing to make it to work or school. Unlike someone who is naturally introverted, this sign is marked by a change in typical sociability, as when someone pulls away from the social support he or she typically enjoys.

They stop taking care of themselves and may engage in risky behavior.

You may notice a change in the level of personal care or an act of poor judgment on his or her part. For instance, someone may let his or her hygiene deteriorate, or the person may start abusing alcohol or illicit substances or engage in other self-destructive behaviors that alienate loved ones.

They seem overcome with hopelessness and overwhelmed by their circumstances.

Have you noticed someone who used to be optimistic and now can't find anything to be hopeful about? That person may be suffering from extreme or prolonged grief, or feelings of worthlessness or guilt. People in this situation may say that the world would be better off without them, suggesting suicidal thinking.

If you recognize that someone is suffering, what should you do?

The answer is simple: reach out, connect, try to inspire hope and, above all, offer help. Show compassion and caring and a willingness to find a solution when the person may not have the will or drive to help himself or herself. It may take more than one offer, and you may need to reach out to others who share your concern about the person who is suffering.

You can help change the conversation about mental health issues and stigma associated with it by learning the 5 signs. And if you or any member of your household needs help, your employee assistance program is designed to provide short-term counseling services, work-life assistance, and other guidance to help you and your family handle concerns constructively before they become major issues.



You don't need to face your problems alone.

Resources

- The above information was provided by the Campaign to Change Direction, a collection of groups joined together in a national campaign to raise awareness of and provide education about mental health issues. You can learn more at www.changedirection.org.

