

Information About Specific Mental Health Problems

Please find listed below signs that you may observe, and symptoms that people may experience, if someone has a mental health problem

ANXIETY AND PANIC ATTACKS

Whilst anxiety can be a normal emotion, 5% of people experience extreme anxiety that can severely impair their functioning. Disorders include social phobia, post traumatic stress disorder, agoraphobia and panic disorder.

Signs Include:

- uneasiness
- visible discomfort
- swearing/trembling
- repetitive behaviour (eg hand washing)
- looking extremely frightened
- afraid to enter a lecture theatre
- extreme fear in 'performance' situations

Symptoms include:

- panic attacks
- hyperventilation and dizziness
- headaches
- muscle tension and pain
- heart palpitations
- feelings or irritability

DEPRESSION

A person suffering from depression may experience a depressed mood, loss of interest and enjoyment, reduced self esteem and self confidence, feelings of guilt and worthlessness, bleak view of the future, ideas of self-harm or suicide.

A person suffering depression may, at times, exhibit manic behaviour (such as suddenly making extreme life-changes).

Signs Include:

- difficulty in concentrating
- extreme lack of motivation/enjoyment
- loss or gain of weight
- lack of general happiness
- extreme irritability/agitation

Symptoms include:

- a need for more or less sleep
- change in appetite (increased or decreased)
- inability to enjoy life
- suicidal thoughts
- feelings of hopelessness and despair

All thoughts of suicide and/or homicide must be taken seriously

SCHIZOPHRENIA AND OTHER PSYCHOTIC DISORDERS

In the acute phases of psychosis people lose touch with reality. Thoughts, feelings and perceptions are seriously affected and people may see, hear, taste or feel things that are not shared by those around them (hallucinations).

Delusions are false beliefs which may include feelings of persecution, guilt, extreme paranoia or grandeur.

Signs Include: Symptoms include:

- agitation
- hallucinations (see above)
- 'odd' beliefs □ mood blunted, or loss of, emotions
- bizarre behaviour
- bizarre thoughts
- disorganised speech/thought processes
- delusions
- talking to self in public
- social withdrawal
- being overly superstitious
- extreme loss of motivation
- speech may not make sense to and be illogical

Remember when interacting with people with a mental health problem:

- It may be appropriate for you to discuss your observations with a person confidentially (eg UNE Student Assist or Tablelands Mental Health Ph. 1300 669 757). You may be the first person to realise that something is not right.
- Do not discuss your observations in front of the lecture or tutorial group. This may add to a sense of stigmatisation, paranoia or low self-esteem that the person may already be feeling.
- Express your concerns in private and leave diagnosis and treatment to the appropriate professions.