

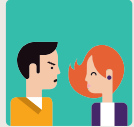
Early warning signs of mental ill health and how to respond



Early Identification Skills

Common Signs of Psychological Illness

In some cases people may not disclose a mental health condition, but you may notice something in their behaviour that indicates that they are experiencing some form of distress. Common signs include:



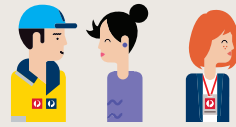
Emotional responses and erratic/extreme behaviour- uncharacteristic behaviour which may be overly sensitive, irritable, angry, teary, tense or fixated



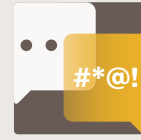
Obsession with parts of the job, and neglect of others



Disengagement and low morale



Withdrawal behaviour such as reduced participation in work activities



Increase use of negative language and workplace conflict



Increase substance use



Working longer or fewer hours



Decrease or change in mood



Increased unplanned absence



Changes in physical appearance and reduced performance levels



Changes in eating habits

The best way to recognise early signs is to get to know your team and you will be more likely to notice things are not going well. Changes in an employee's usual behaviour are the most observable early signs.

Recognising Early Warning Signs

Individual Mental Health Continuum

Mild Mental Health Issue

Changes to Emotions, behaviour and thinking that is not part of the normal ebb and flow of the human condition; May temporarily impact functioning, is usually transient and generally self-resolve.

Examples/signs

- Negative feelings, thinking and behaviors
- Sad, downhearted, weepy
- Over emotional & over sensitive
- Grief and sorrow
- Rude, rebellious
- Argumentative, overly sensitive, irritable, angry, teary

What you can do...

- Keep an eye on, regularly touch base to listen and support. Offer Employee Assistant Program and or professional help if feel it is required.

Moderate Mental Health Issue

Problems associated with mood, behaviour and or thinking that are abnormal for that person and/or are significantly impacting one or more areas of their functioning (e.g. occupational, interpersonal, physical, emotional) but not to the level they meet the criteria for a diagnosis

Examples/signs

- Withdrawing from family, friends and/or workmates.
- Uncharacteristic neglect of work, household or personal or parental responsibilities.
- Changes in personal hygiene or appearance
- Deterioration in work performance,
- Absenteeism/ presentism
- Difficulty concentrating, appearing distant and remembering things
- Panic, being extremely anxious or markedly depressed.
- Loss or marked changes in mood.
- Inappropriate emotional responses.

What you can do...

- Early identification and professional intervention is important to arrest further decline; Gentle persistence to encourage professional help; frequent touching base.

Severe Mental Health Issue

Problems with mood, behaviour and/or thinking reach the criteria for a formal diagnosis; Severe impact on one or more areas of functioning, including those around them.

Examples/signs

- Major Depressive disorder, Depression
- Anxiety disorders such as generalized anxiety disorder, acrophobia
- Various disorders- bipolar, personality, schizophrenia, Obsessive compulsive disorders, Post traumatic Stress disorder
- Eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia
- Hoarding behavior.
- Drug and alcohol/ substance abuse
- Substance dependence
- Significant and persistent withdrawing from family, friends and/or workmates.
- Regular and persistent absenteeism.
- Problems with mood, behavior and/ or thinking which severely impacts functioning.

What you can do...

- Professional help is needed; HR and WHS should be involved to ensure appropriate mechanisms are in place to support the person and their performance.