



# Mental Health Supports

Directory of contacts and guidelines for recognising the signs of mental illness and crisis

Developed by Chloe Osborn

## **Signs of Mental Health Illness**

Common signs of mental illness in adults and adolescents can include the following:

- Excessive worrying or fear
- Feeling excessively sad or low
- Confused thinking or problems concentrating and learning
- Extreme mood changes, including uncontrollable “highs” or feelings of euphoria
- Prolonged or strong feelings of irritability or anger
- Avoiding friends and social activities
- Difficulties understanding or relating to other people
- Changes in sleeping habits or feeling tired and low energy
- Changes in eating habits such as increased hunger or lack of appetite
- Changes in sex drive
- Difficulty perceiving reality (delusions or hallucinations, in which a person experiences and senses things that don't exist in objective reality)
- Inability to perceive changes in one's own feelings, behavior or personality (“lack of insight” or anosognosia)
- Overuse of substances like alcohol or drugs
- Multiple physical ailments without obvious causes (such as headaches, stomach aches, vague and ongoing “aches and pains”)
- Thinking about suicide
- Inability to carry out daily activities or handle daily problems and stress
- An intense fear of weight gain or concern with appearance

**Mental health conditions can also begin to develop in young children. Because they're still learning how to identify and talk about thoughts and emotions, their most obvious symptoms are behavioral. Symptoms in children may include the following:**

- Changes in school performance
- Excessive worry or anxiety, for instance fighting to avoid bed or school
- Hyperactive behavior
- Frequent nightmares
- Frequent disobedience or aggression
- Frequent temper tantrums

### **Suicide warning signs – Mental Health Crisis**

#### **Signs to look out for:**

If someone shows one or more of these signs it doesn't necessarily mean they are thinking about suicide but it's likely they will need your support. It is important to remember that everyone is different and there is no way to predict someone's behaviour.

**The most important signs to look out for are signs of distress such as major changes in someone's behaviour. This could include:**

- long periods of sadness, depression, anxiety, agitation, withdrawing from family and friends;

- expressing anger, rage, or are argumentative;
- exhibiting reckless or risky behaviours;
- change in appetite, sleeping patterns or energy;
- not wanting to be touched or loss of interest in sex;
- loss of interest or not participating in things they usually enjoy such as family events, or recreational activities;
- neglecting their personal appearance or hygiene (if this is unusual);
- increased alcohol and/or other drug use; and/or
- changes in cultural or spiritual practices.

Other signs that can indicate that someone is thinking about suicide include:**1,2**

- talking about feeling hopeless, worthless, overwhelmed, trapped, or lonely, having no purpose in life, and/or fear of being abandoned;
- talking indirectly about death or suicide;
- talking directly about death, suicide, not wanting to live anymore, making threats to end their life, or have made a plan to suicide;
- writing a suicide note/goodbye letters or will, organising their own funeral, saying goodbye to loved ones; or
- giving away possessions.

Things people may say when thinking about suicide:

- "I wish I were dead".
- "I don't want to be here anymore".
- "You won't have to bother with me anymore".
- "I'd like to go to sleep and never wake up".
- "I have found a solution to all of my problems".

## How to offer support

The only way to find out if someone is thinking about suicide is to ask them directly. You will not make things worse and often people are relieved to talk about how they are feeling.

1. Ask an open but direct question	Talk about what you have noticed about them, that they don't seem to be their usual self, appear sad, angry, depressed, overwhelmed or upset. This provides an opportunity to find out how they are really going. Ask if they are thinking about suicide. Be open with them by asking if they have made a plan to take their own life and how they are going to do this. For example, you could ask: 'Are you having thoughts of suicide?' While it is more important to ask the question directly rather than to be concerned about the exact wording, you should not ask about suicide in leading or judgemental way.
2. Listen to support	Take time to listen carefully to what they are saying and repeat back what they have said to make sure you have understood how they are feeling. This helps to show that you care about them. It is important to listen to their perspective without judging them. Statements such as, "let's take some time to think this through", or "let's find someone to talk to" can help them understand that they are not helpless or alone. Be patient, calm and express empathy when the person is talking about their feelings.
3. Acknowledge (them)	Use their name often when talking to them and acknowledge the pain and suffering they are feeling. Avoid trying to fix the problem or convincing them not to take their life.
4. Be there	Encourage them to speak about what is going on for them that has led them to this point. See if together you can come up with some ideas about how they can seek help, they might already know what works for them. You could encourage them to get professional help such as making an urgent appointment with a doctor and offer to go with them.
5. Stay connected	Stay with them and try and form a connection. The important thing is to show that that you care and are concerned. Reassure them that there are solutions or ways of coping. Try to give them hope by explaining that help is available

	<p>and that you will be there to support them in their recovery.          You could discuss next steps and time frames. And ask the person how they would like support going forward.</p>
<p>6. Tell someone</p>	<p>If the person is reluctant to seek help, keep encouraging them to see a health professional or call a helpline for support. You can also contact a helpline together from the list below.          If they are still reluctant to seek help you can call a helpline and ask for advice on the situation and how to best assist them. You don't need to be the individual in crisis to call and ask for support.          Tell someone else. After helping someone who is suicidal, make sure you engage in appropriate self-care and reach out to someone about how you are feeling as a supporter.          If you are worried someone is in immediate danger call 000.</p>

**Contacts:**

**Emergency Services – 24/7 Services**

There is a range of mental health services available to provide support and immediate response to people in crisis or in need of urgent medical care.

**Mental Health Emergency Response Line** - The Mental Health Emergency Response Line (MHERL) is a 24-hour telephone service for people in the Perth metropolitan area experiencing a mental health crisis.

**Metro callers** – Phone 1300 555 788 (local call)

**Peel callers** – Free call 1800 676 822 (free from land line only)

**RuralLink Outside metro area** – Free call 1800 552 002 (free from land line only)

**Youth Services**

**CAHMS (Child and Adolescent Health Service)** - 1800 048 636

**Other Emergency Contact Numbers:**

**Police, Fire, Ambulance** - 000

Mental Health Ambulance

**Suicide Call Back Service (external site)** – 1300 659 467

**Poisons Information Centre** – 13 11 26

**Lifeline (external site)** – 13 11 14

**Kids Helpline (external site)** – 1800 551 800

**Crisis Care (counselling, accommodation and food)** – 9223 1111

**For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are going through a tough time and feel like having a yarn** – 13YARN – 13 92 76

**Support if you, or someone you know, is experiencing sexual assault or domestic and family violence (all ages)** - 1800 737 732

**If you need information or someone to talk to:**

**Headspace (external site)** – 1800 650 890

**Men's Line Australia (external site)** – 1300 789 978

**The Samaritans Crisis Line (external site)** – **Crisis Line:** 135 247 and **Youthline WA:** 1800 198 313

**Post and Antenatal Depression Association of Australia (PANDA) HelpLine (external site)** – 1300 726 306

**Multicultural Mental Health (external site)** – 1300 136 289

**Alcohol and Drug Information Service (external site)** – 9442 5000 or **Country Toll Free** 1800 198 024

**Sexual Assault Resource Centre (external site)** – 1800 199 888

**YouthFocus (external site) – 6266 4333**

**Lifeline (external site) – 13 11 14**

**Kids Helpline (external site) – 1800 551 800**

**Crisis Care (counselling, accommodation and food) – 9223 1111**