

Anxiety and Depression in the Open

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What will I notice in someone who is struggling with anxiety and/or depression?

Signs and Symptoms of Depression

*There are different types and severities of depression

- Feelings of hopelessness, emptiness, and/or sadness
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities
- Weight loss or gain
- Over or under eating
- Over or under sleeping
- Irritability
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Indecisiveness
- Suicidal ideation

Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety

*There are different types and severities of anxiety

- Excessive worrying
- Difficulty concentrating
- Restlessness
- Easily fatigued
- Muscle tension
- Irritability
- Sleep disturbance
- Panic attacks

How can I tell someone I am feeling depressed or anxious?

- If there is someone you are particularly close to that you can trust and you know they are a caring person and good listener, talk to them.
- There are helplines available if you do not feel you have anyone in your life you can talk to.
- Here are some ways to start the conversation.
 - o “I think something’s wrong because I feel _____. I’m worried that I may be depressed. Can we talk?”
 - o “I want to talk to you about something that’s hard for me to put into words. I feel _____, and it’s been going on for a while now.”

- “I think I should see a therapist, but I’m scared. Can you help me find one and make sure I keep the appointment?”
- “I want to let you know that I’m living with depression. I may need extra support while I’m dealing with this.”
- “Even though I may seem fine on the outside, I feel _____ on the inside.”
- “You can support me by _____. That would be really helpful to me.”
- They may have questions to help them understand better what you are going through and how they can help.
- The person you talk to may invalidate your feelings.
 - This could be due to personal experiences, cultural norms, or lack of education on how to speak with a person experiencing mental health issues.
 - Don’t be afraid to reach out to someone else.

What do I do if I notice these things in myself?

- If your symptoms start to interfere with your day-to-day activities (example: not being able to get up and go to work, increased substance use, or not being present with family/friends), it is time to contact a mental health professional.
 - You can start talking about it with your primary care physician if you feel uncomfortable talking to a mental health professional first.
 - Be prepared, though, that they might recommend medication.
 - Plan how you will respond to this.
- Consider what has worked in the past when you felt this way and try those tools.
- Create a self-care plan.
 - Share it with a friend and ask them to check-in about it with you.
- Practice mindfulness.
- Shift one thing in your day, such as making time for a walk.
- Research different coping skills and try the ones that appeal to you.
- ASK FOR HELP!

What do I do if I notice these things in a loved one?

You can:

- Check-in with them.
- Ask permission to talk about it.
 - “I noticed that *insert symptom.* Would it be ok for us to talk about it?”
- Validate their feelings.
 - “That sounds really hard. Can you tell me more about what it is like for you?”
- Give them time to decide whether or not to talk to you about it.
 - Offer an open-door invitation to talk to you.

When talking to them make sure...

- They feel safe in environment while talking about it.
 - Public private space (coffee shop, library, walking path, etc.)

- You want them to feel that they can leave if they want to.
- You have plenty of time to devote to the conversation.
- You listen more than you speak.
- You avoid distractions.
- They know they don't have to answer or talk about anything they don't want to.

Please:

- Do not diagnose them.
 - "I think you have depression."
 - Leave this to the professionals.
- Do not speak over them.
- Do not dismiss or invalidate what they are saying.
- Do not direct the conversation away from them and onto yourself.
- Do not give unsolicited advice.

Remember:

- Silence is ok. Be patient if they don't know how to talk about it.
- The idea is to listen. Ask questions for clarification, not to prompt them to speak.
- Avoid asking *why*. Try using *what* and *how* questions instead.
- Ask if they are open to hearing about it before giving advice or suggestions on coping strategies.
- You can talk about your own struggles, but make sure you keep the conversation on them.
 - "Sometimes I experience it this way. Is that what it is like for you?"

Can I ask them if they have thoughts of suicide?

- Yes, you can ask this. Here are some pointers when doing so:
 - Be as specific and direct as possible.
 - If you mean thoughts of killing themselves, say that, rather than 'hurting' themselves.
 - It can be a relief for them to talk about it.
 - You will not put the thought or idea of suicide into their head by asking.
 - In fact, research shows that asking them specifically about suicide may decrease their chances of dying due to suicide.
 - Stay calm when they talk to you about their thoughts of suicide.
 - The time to get others involved is when they say that they:
 - Have a plan and/or intent to commit suicide.
 - Have the means to commit suicide.
 - You can call the police for a wellness check if you believe they need professional help and they aren't seeking it.

Sauk County Mental Health Crisis Hotline: 1-800-533-5692