

NOTICING SIGNS OF MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

COMPETENCIES: EMOTIONAL/ MENTAL HEALTH, EVALUATION & OBSERVATION, CRISIS PREVENTION & INTERVENTION

PREZI LINK: <https://prezi.com/view/hKTjf4kRh5w0uxv8nr60/>



INTRODUCTION

It is natural to experience emotional ups and downs. Life events affect everyone, and some of us are more vulnerable to experiencing mental health challenges because of life events both past and present. While autism is not a mental illness, the individuals you serve may have experienced mental health challenges in the past or may be currently experiencing difficulties. You can take action by teaching someone to recognize the signs of their own mental health status or assist them in getting proper services.

COMMON SIGNS



- Sudden changes in behavior
- Withdrawal
- Lethargy
- Shutdown
- Increased repetitive behavior
- Agitation
- Poor self-care
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Loss of communication
- Increased sensory challenges

IN A CRISIS SITUATION

In a crisis situation, work to guarantee the immediate safety of the individual and others involved. Use calm and concrete language, without speaking a lot. Find out what the person needs to feel calm, and if he can't respond, provide a known calming tool or strategy or consider removing him from the situation. It might be necessary following the crisis to refer the individual to other professionals or co-workers for more in-depth care and decision-making. If you are uncertain, ask your supervisor for guidance.



CHALLENGES

Possible mental health challenges might include Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Anxiety/Panic Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, Depression, Schizophrenia, or other co-diagnoses. Of course, it's not your job to diagnose these; however, knowing how to identify the signs can be helpful to both you and the individual.



WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW!

1. If you witness sudden changes in a person's behavior (for the worse), note the setting, frequency and any related triggers. Share this with those who can provide assistance.
2. If you are aware of activities or items that assist a person in feeling calm or behaviorally organized, be sure to make them accessible. Family members or co-workers who know the individual may be able to share strategies with you.
3. Talk to the individual when she is calm and relaxed to help you both learn more about her needs when she is in duress, anxious or sad.
4. Seek assistance from your supervisor and colleagues whenever you feel in over your head.