

# DISCOVERING A PROBLEM

## TYPICAL SYMPTOMS AND BEHAVIORS

Everybody experiences these issues to a greater or lesser extent. Multiple, severe or sustained episodes that interfere with the ordinary processes of life do need to be addressed.

Symptoms come and go in cycles, and vary in severity.

Stress makes symptoms worse. Anyone can lose sleep, become anxious, and lose effectiveness or even collapse ("break down") or act out under too much stress. This passes quickly for most people. However, when people with chronic mental health conditions experience stress, they have much more symptom burden, and much more trouble maintaining self-control. They are much more likely to act impulsively and cause harm or get into trouble with the law.

## CHANGES IN THINKING OR PERCEIVING

- Hallucinations
- Delusions
- Excessive fears or suspiciousness
- Inability to concentrate

## CHANGES IN MOOD

- Sadness coming out of nowhere, unrelated to events or circumstances
- Extreme excitement or euphoria
- Pessimism, perceiving the world as gray and lifeless
- Expressions of hopelessness
- Loss of interest in once pleasurable activities
- Thinking or talking about suicide

## CHANGES IN BEHAVIOR

- Sitting and doing nothing
- Friendlessness
- Abnormal self-involvement
- Dropping out of activities
- Decline in academic or athletic performance
- Hostility, from one formerly pleasant and friendly
- Indifference, even in highly important situations
- Inability to express joy
- Inappropriate laughter
- Inability to concentrate or cope with minor problems
- Irrational statements
- Peculiar use of words or language structure
- Involvement in automobile accidents
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Forgetfulness and loss of valuable possessions
- Attempts to escape through geographic change
- Frequent moves or hitchhiking trips
- Bizarre behavior (skipping, staring, strange posturing)
- Unusual sensitivity to noises, light, clothing

## PHYSICAL CHANGES

- Hyperactivity or inactivity (sometimes alternating)
- Deterioration in hygiene or personal care
- Unexplained weight gain or loss
- Sleeping too much or being unable to sleep