Outlined on this page are signs to help you determine if someone is in need of mental help and support.

Changes in behaviour

- Unusual patterns of behaviour
- Avoidance of tasks or responsibilities
- Withdrawing socially/verbally/emotionally
- Neglecting self-care
- Agitated or excessively demanding interaction with others
- Excessive/uncharacteristic use of alcohol or other drugs
- An increase in impulsive behaviour
- Increased risk taking behaviour
- Talking of suicide or violent acts towards self and/or others
- Taking about plans/action toward suicidal intent or self harm

Signs of emotional distress

- Being tearful
- Sighing frequently
- Appearing vague
- Seeming confused
- Experiencing high levels of anxiety or having panic attacks
- Unpredictable expression of anger
- Displaying agitation
- Thoughts or speech patterns that seem pressured or race or seem odd
- Sustained depressed mood
- Sustained irritability
- Frequent expressions of negativity
- Concerned about someone who is showing emotional distress? Actively assist the person to contact one of the UNSW support services

Academic engagement

- A marked change in concentration/academic/work place performance
- Increased occasions of uncompleted academic tasks or neglect of personal responsibilities
- Loss of motivation
- Academic failure

Signs of physical health issues

- Looking pale, perspiring excessively, having breathing difficulties
- Fainting or loss of consciousness
- Muscular spasms
- Obvious intense pain, extreme fatigue
- Complaining of sleep problems or falling asleep in unexpected circumstances
- Regular episodes of illness, colds, flu etc
Concerned about someone who is showing physical distress? Advise about the University Health Service and/or check if they have a local GP. Encourage them to make an appointment.

UNSW Health Service

Phone: 9385 5425

How can you help?

Action steps in an emergency (i.e. immediate danger of harm)

- Contact UNSW Security – where possible get someone else to make the call. This leaves you free to focus on the needs of the person who needs assistance.
- Security Direct Emergency Number 9385 6666 (extension number 6666) or free call 1800 626 003
- Try to make the person in distress safe. If possible keep them away from possible sources of harm such as: sharp objects, items that could be used as projectiles, windows, staircases, balconies, dangerous objects or chemicals.
- Let someone else know your concerns about the student
- Ask for backup support while you wait for Security personnel to arrive
- Avoid leaving the distressed person alone – ask someone to stay with the person/student even if you only have to leave for a small period of time

Concerned about someone in the UNSW community

- Spend some time with the student/person involved: listen and establish an understanding of the situation
- be non-judgemental in your responses and attitude
- explore knowledge of sources of information available to the person (UNSW services, community services, websites)
- explore if some solutions have already been explored
- encourage the person to seek professional/medical support
- consider whether the person needs an immediate ACTIVE referral to UNSW services providing student support. See the Student Life and Learning website
- demonstrate continuing interest and support
- offer to take them to a support service
- offer to call a support service on their behalf
- you might consider offering to talk with them again and indicate that you have an interest in their well being.