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.

Signs of Someone in Need of Help

Document Version Date 25/02/2014
UNSW CRICOS Provider Code: 00098G
https://student.unsw.edu.au/signs-someone-need