

## Five Signs of Emotional Suffering

Nearly one in every five people, or 43.8 million American adults, has a diagnosable mental health condition.<sup>1</sup> Half of all lifetime cases of mental disorders begin by age 14.<sup>2</sup> In addition, 1.7M Americans sustain a traumatic brain injury each year - which may affect their cognitive and emotional functioning. Drug use is on the rise in this country and 23.5 million Americans are addicted to alcohol and drugs. That's approximately one in every 10 Americans over the age of 12.

Often our friends, neighbors, co-workers, and even family members are suffering emotionally and don't recognize the symptoms or won't ask for help.

Here are five signs that may mean someone is in emotional pain and might need help:



### **Personality changes.**

You may notice sudden or gradual changes in the way that someone typically behaves. People in this situation may behave in ways that don't seem to fit their values, or the person may just seem different.



### **Uncharacteristically angry, anxious, agitated, or moody.**

You may notice the person has more frequent problems controlling his or her temper and seems irritable or unable to calm down. People in more extreme situations of this kind may be unable to sleep or may explode in anger at a minor problem.



### **Withdrawal or isolation from other people.**

Someone who used to be socially engaged may pull away from family and friends and stop taking part in activities that used to be enjoyable. In more severe cases the person may start failing to make it to work or school. Not to be confused with the behavior of someone who is more introverted, this sign is marked by a change in a person's typical sociability, as when someone pulls away from the social support typically available.



### **May neglect self-care and engage in risky behavior.**

You may notice a change in the person's level of personal care or an act of poor judgment. For instance, someone may let personal hygiene deteriorate, or the person may start abusing alcohol or illicit substances or engaging in other self-destructive behavior that may alienate loved ones.



### **Overcome with hopelessness and overwhelmed by circumstances.**

Have you noticed someone who used to be optimistic and now can't find anything to be hopeful about? That person may be suffering from extreme or prolonged grief, or feelings of worthlessness or guilt. People in this situation may say that the world would be better off without them, suggesting suicidal thinking.

## IF YOU RECOGNIZE THAT SOMEONE IN YOUR LIFE IS SUFFERING, NOW WHAT?

You connect, you reach out, you inspire hope, and you offer help. Show compassion and caring and a willingness to find a solution when the person may not have the will or drive to do it alone. There are many resources in our communities.

It may take more than one offer, and you may need to reach out to others who share your concern about the person who is suffering.

If everyone is more open and honest about our emotional health and well-being, we can prevent pain and suffering, and those in need will get the help they deserve.

You can learn more at [changedirection.org](http://changedirection.org).

A collective impact effort led by  **giveanhour**  
Giving help and hope

<sup>1</sup>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Results from the 2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Mental Health Findings, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (as of 11/24/14).

<sup>2</sup>R. C. Kessler, W. T. Chiu, O. Demler, K.R. Merikangas, E. E. Walters. "Prevalence, Severity, and Comorbidity of Twelve-Month DSM-IV Disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication." *Arch. Gen. Psych.* June 2005 62(6):617-627.