



October is National Depression Education & Awareness Month
A Checklist to Help Detect
Early Signs of Anxiety and/or Depression in Loved Ones

Detecting early signs of anxiety and depression is challenging but crucial for providing timely support and intervention. Older adults may be less likely to seek help for mental health concerns due to stigma or the belief that their symptoms are a natural part of aging. Therefore, if you notice several of these signs in an older adult, it's important to approach the situation with compassion and encourage them to seek professional help. Mental health issues like anxiety and depression are treatable, and early intervention can make a significant difference in an older adult's emotional well-being and overall quality of life.

If you notice several of these signs persisting over a period of two weeks or more, it's essential to seek professional help for your loved one.

1. Changes in Mood and Behavior

- Persistent sadness, tearfulness or a consistently low mood.
- Increased irritability, agitation, or restlessness
- Changes in appetite, such as significant weight loss or gain without a clear medical cause.
- A loss of interest in food or a noticeable increase in emotional eating.
- Unexplained mood swings.
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness or feeling trapped.
- Making statements like "I'm worthless" or "Life has no meaning."
- Loss of interest in future plans. Giving away possessions or making statements about not needing things in the future.
- Verbalizing thoughts of self-harm or suicide.
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2. Isolation and Social Withdrawal

- Decreased interest in social activities and hobbies.
- Avoiding social interactions and spending more time alone.
- Loss of interest in maintaining relationships with family and friends.

3. Changes in Sleep Patterns

- Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep (insomnia).
- Excessive daytime sleepiness or fatigue.
- Frequent nightmares or restless sleep.
- Sleeping more than usual (hypersomnia).

4. Physical Symptoms

- Unexplained aches and pains.



- Increased complaints of headaches or digestive problems without a clear medical cause.
- Frequent visits to doctors for physical symptoms that can't be attributed to a specific medical condition.
- Increased complaints about physical health, even with no clear medical diagnosis. This is a common sign of depression in older adults.
- Decline in physical functioning.

5. Cognitive Changes or Sudden Decline in Functioning

- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions.
- Memory problems or forgetfulness.
- Difficulty managing daily tasks such as dressing, cooking, or bathing.

6. Neglecting Self Care

- Neglecting personal hygiene and grooming or household chores.
- Disinterest in maintaining daily routines.
- Wearing the same clothes repeatedly. This can be a sign of depression or dementia.

7. Excessive Worry or Fear

- Frequent or excessive worrying about everyday matters.
- Feeling tense, restless, or on edge.
- Catastrophic thinking and anticipating the worst outcomes.

8. Loss of Interest and Pleasure

- Loss of interest in hobbies, activities, or relationships.
- Feeling emotionally numb or disconnected.

9. Increased Use of Alcohol or Misuse of Medications

- Increased reliance on medication (prescription or over the counter) or alcohol to cope with emotional distress

And lastly, pay attention to what family members, caregivers, or close friends say about the individual's behavior and mood, as they may provide valuable insights. Overall, be patient and understanding. It can be difficult for older adults to talk about their mental health concerns. Encourage open communication, offer your support, and consider consulting a healthcare professional or mental health specialist for a thorough assessment and appropriate treatment options. You can even help them to connect with resources in the community, such as support groups or social activities.

If you believe your loved one may be suffering and may benefit from therapy, we can help. Call Livindi at (508) 416-6030 to make an appointment for an evaluation with one of our licensed, experienced therapists to determine the level and type of care your loved one may need and if our therapy services may be right for your situation.