

MENTAL HEALTH

*“Do the best you can until you know better.
Then when you know better, do better.”
-Maya Angelou*

KNOW THE SIGNS

It's important to recognize the signs and symptoms of a mental illness in ourselves and others and be equipped to respond.

COMMON SIGNS OF MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

- Clear and abrupt change in behavior
- Excessive worrying or fear
- Feeling excessively sad or low
- Confused thinking or problems concentrating and learning
- Extreme mood changes, including uncontrollable “highs” or feelings of euphoria
- Prolonged or strong feelings of irritability or anger
- Avoiding friends and social activities
- Difficulties understanding or relating to other people
- Changes in sleeping habits or feeling tired and low energy
- Changes in eating habits such as increased hunger or lack of appetite
- Changes in sex drive
- Difficulty perceiving reality (this includes delusions or hallucinations, in which a person experiences and senses things that don't exist in reality)
- An inability to perceive changes in one's own feelings, behavior, or personality (this looks like having a “lack of insight”)
- Abuse of substances like alcohol or drugs
- Multiple physical ailments without obvious causes (such as headaches, stomach aches, vague and ongoing “aches and pains”)
- Thinking about suicide
- An inability to carry out daily activities or handle daily problems and stress
- A decline in performance at work or school
- Weight gain or weight loss

TOOLS TO BOOST MENTAL HEALTH

- **Know the signs.** Knowing what signs to look for can help you know when you may need to seek out support.
- **Know how to start the conversation.** Though more people are now talking openly about mental health, stigma is pervasive and can make conversations about mental health tough. ***Being genuine is a good place to start.*** If this is an uncomfortable topic for you, saying something like, “this is hard for me to talk about” can be a good way to start the conversation with a loved one, or a mental health professional.
- **Know what resources are available.** There are many credible organizations you can reference to find resources available in your area. ***Know what resources are available in your community*** so you can be prepared to seek out information for yourself. Having access to resources that provide information on what help is available can be an invaluable tool.
- **Take care of yourself.** “You can't serve from an empty vessel.” The act of providing support to others can sometimes leave you feeling worn out, frustrated or even angry. ***Taking the time to do things for yourself—like taking a walk, doing some breathing exercises or expressing your feelings to an understanding friend—will help you stay healthy, happy, and in a better frame of mind to care for yourself.***