

Leader Toolkit

Recognise the signs of mental illness



We are **RESPONSIBLE** and **COLLABORATIVE** leaders.

We care for our people. We build trust, communicate and support each other.

Why use this tool

If a team member or colleague is behaving erratically or in a way that is not normal for them, we should not just ignore the issue and hope it will go away. The uncommon behaviour may be symptom of something more concerning.

This tool presents the major signs of mental illness. If you observe a number of these (not just one) in a team member or colleague, then it suggests that there could be a problem.

When to use this tool

When you see uncommon behaviour in a team member or colleague, and become concerned about a more serious problem lurking below the surface.

How to use this tool

Become familiar with the signs of mental illness.

Talk with your line manager or your People Business Partner to get help.

Tips

- If you suspect that a team mate might be struggling with anxiety, depression, or another mental health issue, **think about whether you're the right person to say something.**
- As a leader, if a person's behaviour is affecting their or others' work, then you have an **obligation to address the issue.**
- **Create a safe environment** where people can talk about these sorts of issues. Focus on the work and how the person's behaviour is affecting the team. Then give the person the opportunity to respond and share what's going on. Listen in a non-judgmental way.
- Do not report or talk about your suspicions to **anybody except your line manager or your People Business Partner.**

Recognise the signs of mental illness



Some signs of mental illness¹

Emotional	Cognitive
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feeling overwhelmed by day to day activities• Irritability• Sense of loneliness and isolation• Mood swings• Inability to relax• Apathy• Disappointment with self• Feeling unhappy and teary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Forgetfulness• Inability to concentrate• Becoming indecisive or confused• Constant worrying• Inability to plan or think ahead• Anxious or racing thoughts• Becoming inflexible in an effort to maintain control• Poor judgement
Behavioural	Physical
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poor time management• Withdrawing socially• Eating more or less• Broken sleep• Procrastinating• Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)• Using alcohol, cigarettes or drugs to relax• Neglecting responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Headaches• Chest pain, rapid heartbeat• Tension in neck and shoulders• Sore eyes• Digestive issues• Frequent colds• Exhaustion

¹Black Dog Institute

