

How do you spot the signs of mental ill health in children and young people?



Here are some key questions to keep in mind in your work with children and young people. They all sit beneath the most important question:

Has there been a notable shift in their mood, behaviour or appearance?

Mood

- Does their mood seem persistently lower than normal?
- Do they seem distracted or restless?
- Do they seem unusually anxious?
- Do they seem overwhelmed?
- Do they seem angry?
- Do they seem upset?
- Do they seem lethargic or apathetic?
- Do their moods seem to be constantly changing?

- Are they struggling to concentrate?
- Are they acting irritable or short tempered?
- Are they avoiding activities they normally enjoy?
- Are they less interested in things that normally interest them?
- Are they reluctant to speak?
- Are they finding it difficult to make choices?
- Are they presenting unusually non-compliant or defiant behaviour?
- Are they physically or verbally aggressive to others?
- Are they withdrawing and spending less time with friends?
- Are they expressing low self-esteem or the idea that they are 'worthless'?
- Are they refusing to accept praise?
- Are they frequently daydreaming?
- Are they restless or over-active?
- Are they struggling to function well in day-to-day school life?

Behaviour

Appearance

- Are they frequently teary?
- Have they lost or gained weight?
- Do they seem more tired than usual?
- Do they seem to be neglecting their personal presentation?
- Does their body language seem unusually closed?