**Signs that someone you care about is experiencing distress**

Sometimes, people who are experiencing distress display warning signs that they’re having a tough time. These warnings signs are often apparent because they reflect a change in someone. These can be changes in thoughts and feelings, as well as behaviours and physical symptoms. These changes can be different for everyone, depending on who they are, and what they’re going through. You might notice these changes in the things they say, or how they behave or appear. Identifying these can help you support someone experiencing distress.

**Thoughts**

* "What’s the point?”
* "They don’t want to hear from me, I’m just wasting their time/space/energy”
* "This will never get better”
* “No one cares about me”
* “I’m worthless”
* “I can’t be bothered”
* “I’m a failure”
* “It’s all my fault”
* “Everything’s going to go wrong”
* “I can’t handle this”
* Flashbacks or intrusive thoughts about distressing events
* Overthinking and catastrophising
* Thoughts of self-harm or suicidality
* Racing thoughts
* Compulsive thoughts, for example, an increase in sexual fantasies
* Paranoid or suspicious thoughts
* Auditory hallucinations: hearing things that others can’t

**Feelings**

* Sad
* Alone and isolated
* Unmotivated
* Overwhelmed
* Guilt
* Detached
* Panic
* Agitated
* On edge
* Tense
* Nervous
* Angry
* Indecisive
* Elation
* Impulsivity
* Frustrated
* Exhausted
* Dread

**Behaviour**

* Change in energy levels and sleep patterns
* Changes to diet
* Changes to consumption of alcohol or other drugs
* Changes in sex drive
* Changes to spending habits/unusual purchases
* Changes to memory or organisational skills
* Sudden changes in mood
* Crying
* Restlessness and agitation
* Withdrawing from social situations
* Changes in personal hygiene routines
* Missing appointments with health professionals
* Missing doses or cutting out medications
* Unusual expression of language or ideas when speaking and writing
* Rapid or frantic (pressured) speech
* Disinterest in things they once enjoyed
* Deliberate self-harm
* Hearing and responding to voices (auditory hallucinations)
* Procrastination, missing work or other deadlines
* Recklessness
* Avoiding situations
* Calling friends and family to say goodbye or give away prized possessions

**Physical Symptoms**

* Churning gut
* Pounding heart
* Weight changes
* Headaches and muscle aches
* Problems sleeping
* Sweating
* Dizzy or nauseated

*If you notice some of these changes in a friend, you can help. Start by asking them how they’re feeling and listen to that response. Visit acon.org.au/withyou*

*If you’re experiencing some of these feelings yourself, help is available. ACON provides confidential counselling to people in our communities seeking support in relation to their mental health and wellbeing. Contact ACON on (02) 9206 2000 or 1800 063 060 or visit acon.org.au You can also get in contact with other mental health services including QLife on 1800 184 527, the Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467 or Lifeline on 13 11 14.*