

Mental Illness

What is it? A term used to describe a broad range of mental disorders affecting:

- Thinking (difficulty in concentration, memory)
- Mood (feeling sad, loss of hope)
- Behaviour (restlessness, difficulty sleeping)

National College Health Assessment Survey Findings (2013)

Students in the last 12 months:

- 64% felt lonely
- 56% felt overwhelming anxiety
- 89% reported being exhausted
- 10% had seriously considered suicide (1% attempt)

What role can faculty play

Behaviour



Thoughts
Feelings



What do these
behaviours tell
me?

Faculty and staff have such a unique perspective into the lives of young people. You see students on a regular basis, and you see changes in behaviour and impact on academics.

Signs of Distress

1. Academic Signs
2. Physical Signs
3. Emotional Signs

Academic Signs

Deterioration in quality/quantity of work	A negative change in classroom or research performance (i.e. drop in grades)
Missed assignments or exams	Repeated absences from class or from research lab
Disorganized or erratic performance	Decline in enthusiasm in class (i.e. no longer choosing a seat in the front of room)
Student sends frequent lengthy ranting or threatening emails	Continual seeking of special provisions (i.e. extensions)
Disturbing written material or class discussion	Leaves class repeatedly (appearing to take phone call or text)

Physical Signs

Falling asleep in class or other inopportune times	A dramatic change in energy level (either direction)
Worrisome changes in hygiene or personal appearance	Significant weight changes
Frequent state of alcohol intoxication	Noticeable cuts, bruises or burns
Intimidation (of peers and faculty)	Isolation from friends, family or classmates
Student is missing completely	Disruptive classroom behaviours

Emotional Signs

Inappropriate emotional outbursts (unprovoked anger or hostility, sobbing)	Exaggerated personality traits; more withdrawn or more animated than usual
Worrisome changes in hygiene or personal appearance	Direct statements indicating distress, family problems or other difficulties
Peer expresses concern	

How you can help

1. Approach

- I haven't seen you around lately, are you okay?
- I've noticed that you've been absent from class and I'm concerned

2. Listen

- Is there anything I can do to help?
- That sounds like it is hard to deal with.

3. Support

- I want to support you in any way that I can.
- Things can get better

4. Refer

- Have you thought about talking to somebody about this?
- I know somebody who can help.

Conversation tips

- Be aware of resources available
- Be flexible while maintaining academic integrity
- Talk in a private area and speak with a soothing voice
- Know your boundaries. You are not a friend, parent or counselor.
- If the student declines your advice:
 - Accept this response, and indicate I will be here if you change your mind
 - Follow up with genuine concern

Resources at Memorial

Student Support and Crisis Management	Campus Enforcement Patrol
Student Health Clinic	DELTS
Student Wellness	Glenn Roy Bludon Centre
Counseling Centre	Aboriginal Student Office

If you are concerned about a student.. Speak to a counselor
Student Wellness and Counseling
864-8874