

MENTAL HEALTH

Need help right now?

Lifeline Aotearoa's helpline and textline provides 24/7, confidential support from qualified counsellors and trained volunteers.

Call 0800 543 354

Text 'Help' to 4357

www.lifeline.co.nz

Mental illness

Mental illness is any disease or condition that influences the way a person thinks, feels, behaves and relates to others.

Mental illness refers to a wide range of mental health conditions – disorders that affect your mood, thinking and behaviour. For example depression, anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, eating disorders, PTSD and addictive behaviours.

We all experience ups and downs in our mental health: at times we may feel really down and low, other times we may feel happy and balanced. A mental illness is when ongoing signs and symptoms cause frequent stress and affect your ability to function.

What to look out for

If you have a mental illness you can experience problems in the way you think, feel or behave. This can significantly affect your relationships, work and quality of life. Symptoms differ from person to person, but a common sign is if your behaviour changes, suddenly or gradually. These changes can sometimes be a reaction to life events; this is especially true for adolescents. Being in a constant state of mental distress can be very damaging, mentally and physically.

If you've had thoughts of self-harming or are feeling suicidal, contact someone you can trust immediately, such as your GP, or a friend or relative.

There are some fundamental things you can do regularly to keep yourself mentally healthy:

- Keep yourself active – physically, socially, and mentally.
- Teach yourself to think positively – or seek help with this.
- Get help for alcohol and drug problems.
- Improve your education.
- Get regular general health checks.
- Try to live free from discrimination and abusive relationships.

- Work towards financial security.
- Connect to community – join a group, chat to neighbours, meet a friend.
- Include people from culturally different backgrounds in your life.
- Look to the future – take on a new challenge, have a go!

More information

For more information on mental illness and where to get help, visit The Mental Health Foundation [here](#).