

# Depression, Anxiety and Loneliness in People with IDD



## Information for You and People You Support with IDD

Changes in mood, such as feeling anxious, sad, lonely, or depressed, are a common experience in most people whenever our social interactions and routines are interrupted. However, for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, symptoms may appear differently or be overshadowed by their diagnosis, especially in people who do not use words to communicate how they may be feeling. When these symptoms are noticed in a person you support, document and notify your supervisor or nurse.

### General Symptoms of Depression/Anxiety

Changes in	What it might look like	
Mood	<p><b>Irritability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impatience</li> <li>• Disgust</li> <li>• Sighing</li> </ul> <p><b>Grouchiness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rude comments</li> <li>• Abrupt body movements</li> </ul> <p><b>Sadness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crying</li> <li>• Flat affect</li> <li>• Isolation</li> <li>• Aggression</li> <li>• Spitting</li> <li>• Yelling</li> <li>• Hitting</li> <li>• Property destruction</li> </ul>	<p><b>Anxiety</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repetitive questions about safety</li> <li>• Repetitive questions about their own personal health</li> <li>• Wringing hands</li> <li>• Scratching or picking skin</li> <li>• Increased ritualistic behaviors</li> <li>• Complaints of pain without identifiable cause after a thorough evaluation</li> </ul>
Sleep	<p><b>Sleeping less than usual</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staying up later than usual</li> <li>• Getting up multiple times at night</li> <li>• Being exhausted upon awakening</li> <li>• Early morning awakening</li> <li>• Inability to resume sleep</li> </ul>	<p><b>Sleeping more than usual</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Going to bed earlier than usual</li> <li>• Getting up later than usual</li> <li>• Sleeping during the day</li> </ul>

**Changes in****What it might look like**

Appetite	<b>Eating more than usual</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New food obsessions</li> <li>• Stealing or hoarding food</li> </ul>	<b>Eating less than usual</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refusing to eat</li> </ul>
Energy Level	<b>Low energy level</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weakness and fatigue</li> <li>• Loss of energy for simple activities</li> </ul>	<b>Abundance of energy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rapid movements</li> <li>• Rapid speech</li> </ul>
Concentration	<b>Flight of ideas</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Racing thoughts</li> </ul>	<b>Slowness of mental activity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slower speech or communication</li> <li>• Lack of attentiveness</li> </ul>
Self-esteem	<b>Neglect of personal appearance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Untidy clothes</li> <li>• Refusing to shower</li> <li>• Uncombed hair</li> </ul>	<b>Self-blame</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaking negatively about themselves</li> <li>• Increased self-injurious behavior</li> </ul>

**If these symptoms are noted, document them and notify your supervisor or nurse. If these symptoms are severe or potentially harmful to the person’s well-being or those around the person, seek consultation immediately.**

**Things you can do when you support someone who is experiencing signs and symptoms of depression or anxiety:**

- Make sure the signs and symptoms are documented and reported to the supervisor or nurse
- Listen to what the person tells you and also note what you observe
- Don’t try to fix them or tell them why they are wrong to feel depressed or anxious
- Be supportive when new routines are put in place
- Take care not to bring your worries or anxieties into your work environment
- Be positive when modeling social distancing
- Recognize positive steps or improvement in the person
- Respectfully acknowledge fears and concerns the person may express
- Remind them they are in a safe environment
- Use technology to assist with socialization when possible