

COVID 19 - How well are your people coping?

Are they:

1. Struggling to deliver?

Perhaps the person you're concerned about has missed work more often; is missing deadlines; or is not delivering on agreed deliverables? They could be missing scheduled appointments or struggling to be punctual. Or letting others know that they are not keeping up with responsibilities at home.

Sometimes a person might have an explanation for each lapse that seems reasonable and you may still follow your instincts if you sense there's something deeper that accounts for the struggle you are seeing. Consider the overall pattern you're noticing.

2. Lack of Self-Care

You may notice a change in self-care. This may show up in how they dress; or in their personal care routines. Or you might notice a change in food choices – perhaps a shift towards fast food or sugary snacks. They might also stop exercising.

3. Change in Outlook

Some more subtle changes could include the way the person sees the world. They may have become pessimistic or cynical or be quick to see the worst in other people. You might notice a difference in tone in your interactions with them, and a shift in how they see themselves, the world, and other people (see resource on “Thinking Traps” for more).

4. Hopelessness

One particular change in outlook to pay close attention to is someone expressing a lack of hope that things will get better. It can be dispiriting to lose hope. Examples of statements to listen for include:

- ❖ “I don't see things ever improving.”
- ❖ “I feel like giving up.”
- ❖ “I don't know why I even try—nothing ever works out.”
- ❖ “It's pointless—things are never going to get better.”
- ❖ “I feel so hopeless.”

Loss of hope can lower willingness to seek help or to invest our energy in activities and relationships that can help us feel better. Hopelessness increases the risk of the sort of depression which can give rise to suicidal thoughts.

HOW YOU CAN HELP?

Consider checking in with someone else who cares

You may be able to informally check in with someone else who knows them well and invite them to share anything they might have noticed.

It's important to protect the person's privacy and there may be a legitimate concern for their safety.

Approach the Person You're Worried About

Discuss your concerns with the person you're worried about. Pick a time that's mutually convenient and describe what you've seen in as non-judgmental terms as possible. Invite them to respond. The goal is to let them know that you want to be helpful.

These conversations are often not easy to have, so be prepared for a range of responses; for example, the person might:

- ❖ Express bewilderment
- ❖ Get irritated
- ❖ Validate your concerns and tell you more about how they've been
- ❖ Get defensive, possibly as a result of feelings of shame

Expect Some Shame

The issue of shame is important, because it can prevent a person from being open about their struggles.

Shame might be especially prominent when a person isn't meeting their obligations and is already feeling guilty about it; drawing attention to it and letting them know you've noticed can amplify that sense of guilt and shame. They may also feel ashamed if they're engaging in behaviours they're not proud of. Express as clearly as you can that you want to support them regardless of what their struggles might be.

Be aware of Your Own Anxiety

Be aware of your own anxiety about the person's well-being. It's unrealistic to expect yourself to be perfectly calm; recognise your own anxiety about the situation - it can help you to manage it more effectively.

Discuss How You Can Help

If there is a crisis, discuss with the person how they would like you to help. Options can include:

- ❖ Providing a listening ear
- ❖ Helping them come up with a self-directed plan to address the crisis, which may include contacting professional help
- ❖ Brainstorm other resources that might be helpful
- ❖ Providing practical assistance, like taking over or reassigning some responsibilities
- ❖ Referring to other professionals who could be helpful
- ❖ Arranging a support person if appropriate

What If They Don't Want Help?

Just because someone is having a crisis doesn't mean they're ready to receive help. Keep the following principles in mind if they refuse to seek help:

- ❖ Stay as calm as possible
- ❖ Take the long view: Perhaps they will be ready to seek help soon, just not yet
- ❖ Stay supportive: Make sure the person knows that your positive regard for them is not dependent on whether they get the help you think they need
- ❖ Remember that the ultimate decision is theirs

It's hard to watch someone we care about not getting help that may be available. Watch out for thoughts like, "They have to get help," or, "I have to convince them to get help." The best you can do is encourage them to take care of themselves. It is important to uphold the importance of people making their own decisions and choices whenever possible.

Take care of yourself

You may need extra support during a crisis. Seek out support.

Other resources for some signs and symptoms of...

As Coaches and Leaders it's important that we recognise the limits of our professional expertise. And build our own list of trusted professionals, or professional referring bodies to share with Coachees or Clients who need help or support beyond what we are qualified to provide.

Anxiety

- ❖ <https://www.health.com/condition/anxiety/12-signs-you-may-have-an-anxiety-disorder>

Stress

- ❖ <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/stress/signs-of-stress/>

Depression

- ❖ <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/depression/symptoms/>
- ❖ <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/depression/signs-and-symptoms>

Bi-polar disorder/manic depression

- ❖ <https://facty.com/conditions/bipolar-disorder/what-is-bipolar-disorder/4/>

Schizophrenia

- ❖ <https://www.webmd.com/schizophrenia/guide/what-is-psychosis#1>