



Noticing Mental Health Concerns for Your Child

How do you know if you should be concerned about your child's mental health and well-being?

As a parent/caregiver, you know your child best, and you are often the first to notice when they might be having difficulty with their mental health. Perhaps you have noticed a change in their emotions, behaviour, or development. This worksheet provides some prompts to help you consider if your child might be experiencing a mental health concern.

Note: While we use the term "child" throughout, we recognize that the child you are caring for may be a teenager or young adult.

On the sheet below, you can note aspects of the changes you have noticed: the **nature** of the concern, its **duration**, **intensity**, **frequency**, and **impact**. If you choose to seek professional help, your reflections on this worksheet might help you to organize your thoughts when sharing your concerns.

WORKSHEET

Nature

Describe the nature of your concern. What signs are you noticing? What have you observed?



Duration

When did you first start to notice these signs? Has this been going on for days, weeks, or months? Has it been a gradual or sudden change? Did the change happen at the same time as any major life events?



Intensity

How intense are the emotions or behaviours you are noticing? Are they typical for their age and stage of development? If no, are the concerns mild, moderate, or more serious? (Consider providing a rating on a scale of 1 to 10. If you rate this over time, you may be able to see progress or note when more help may be needed.)



Frequency

How frequently are you noticing the concern? Is this something you notice daily, weekly, or just occasionally? Does it line up with any particular events, times, or situations?



Impact

How is this concern impacting your child and their daily life? Are they struggling to do schoolwork? Are their relationships with friends or family suffering? Are they less interested in things they used to enjoy? Are they having trouble with eating or sleeping?



If your answers to these prompts suggest that the concerns are long-lasting (i.e., more than two weeks), intense, frequent, and/or impacting your child's functioning at home, school, or in the community, your child may be experiencing a mental health problem. A next step may be talking with your child about what you have noticed, and/or seeking the guidance of a regulated mental health professional (e.g., social worker, psychologist).

There are many caring mental health professionals who can assist. Start with your child's school and/or your family doctor. Most school boards in Ontario offer free mental health services from school social workers and psychology staff. Community resources are also available. You can find help in your community through [Children's Mental Health Ontario](#) or [One Stop Talk](#).

For more in-depth information check out: [Noticing Mental Health Concerns for Your Child](#)

If it is an emergency – If your child has a suicide plan and intends to act on it right away – do not leave your child alone. Immediately contact the Suicide Crisis Helpline 9-8-8, go to the emergency room of your local hospital, or call for an ambulance. If you discover your child after a suicide attempt, call 911 right away.

