



ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH: Signs and Symptoms

Program Description

One of the greatest challenges advisors face is managing the impact of mental health challenges on and within a chapter. Learn and discuss ways to identify, approach and support members who face issues related to mental, physical and social well-being.

Learning Objectives

- List the most common mental health challenges facing college students.
- Identify signs and symptoms of these mental health challenges.
- Identify resources available at your college or university.
- Practice ways to start a conversation or intervene when you have a concern about someone's health or wellness.



What is Mental Health?

The World Health Organization defines mental health as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to their community.

Common Issues

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Suicide
- Bipolar Disorder
- Eating Disorders
- Addiction
- Self-Harm
- Schizophrenia
- Struggles with Identity

Common Warning Signs

- Sleep (excessive or lack of)
- Mood (sad, anxious, irritable)
- Appetite/eating habits or weight gain/loss
- Energy levels
- Interest/motivation
- Performance or participation in school, work, chapter activities or relationships
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Unhealthy or excessive exercise, vomiting after eating or poor body image
- Arguments/fights, unusual or exaggerated reactions to events
- Thoughts of death or suicide, comments or writings about death or suicide



Case Studies

Case Study 1. Jessica

Jessica is a 19-year-old sophomore who joined the chapter at the beginning of the semester. Jessica was a desirable new member because she was involved in activities during high school and she had a 3.75 GPA. She moved in the house and right away, you notice she sleeps a lot and doesn't seem to leave the house very often. Despite all of the sleep she seems to get, she has deep-set dark circles under her eyes and appears to be lethargic. Jessica doesn't come down for meals and only seems to get ready for the day when chapter meetings happen. Sometimes Jessica leaves the house at night, but no one is really sure where she is going or what she is doing. Jessica has a few very close friends outside of the chapter, but hasn't really gotten close to anyone in the chapter just yet.

Case Study 2. Ashley

Ashley is a 21-year-old senior in the chapter who is an executive officer. Her major is very demanding and she is working hard to land a coveted spot in a graduate program. You've heard sisters talk about how Ashley has been pretty moody lately and there was a chapter meeting where she snapped at someone and it caused some drama. Ashley shares with sisters her life motto is "work hard, play harder." She has a reputation for drinking to blacking out, but she asserts she is in control and it is her business and her behavior. Prior to the incident in the chapter meeting, people generally felt pretty comfortable talking with Ashley but now women are a little hesitant to talk with her. Aside from the rumors about blacking out, Ashley doesn't really do anything that would cause her to be sent to Standards. Ashley was really close to her little sister in the Sorority until they had a falling out after a party.

Case Study 3. Emily

Emily is an 18-year-old freshman in the chapter who is a good member and in the past, has enjoyed hanging out with sisters. Emily has been struggling with school lately and has shared her issues openly; she has been going to study hours more frequently and has meetings with the Scholarship chairwoman regularly. Emily is either really positive or really negative about the changes she is making to get better grades; there isn't really an in between with Emily. Recently, Emily has been wearing really baggy clothing with long sleeves. Emily has been working out a lot more lately, but prefers not to go with other sisters. You overheard someone saying that Emily wears similar clothes when she works out and she thought this was really weird because she seemed really hot. She skipped out on the chapter formal and recently broke up with her boyfriend. Emily is well-liked in the chapter.



Campus Resources

Who are the best resources and allies on your campus? Think of university centers, offices or staff members who are knowledgeable about health and wellness issues.



See Something and Say Something

How to Intervene

- Choose a time and place.
- Start by naming the signs in her behavior that you have considered.
- Listen and show empathy.
- Educate and encourage the use of resources.

Possible Outcomes

- **Lack of Readiness:** If your member isn't ready to hear what you have to say, the best thing you can do is assert your concern and encourage them to connect with the appropriate services on campus.
- **Personal Support:** If your conversation goes poorly or your member isn't ready to seek help, you might consider accessing counseling services for yourself as a way to cope with and understand the concerns you have for her.
- **Red Flag Statements:** If a member indicates she wants to hurt herself or someone else, you need to take this seriously and follow your chapter's crisis management plan.
 - Your students should be told to notify you immediately in this situation or if they feel threatened by someone who is demonstrating mental health signs or symptoms. If a member becomes combative or aggressive, remove yourself from the situation and/or call 911. Confirm that your chapter has a crisis management plan in place. If your chapter does not, a plan is available on GammaPhiBeta.org.

Take It Home

- Confirm your crisis management plan.
- Be informed about your campus' mental health resources. Refer often to the list of resources generated in today's session.
- Educate your REAL Wellness chairwoman. After RLC, work with your chairwoman to make sure she is aware of resources on campus and is prepared to refer members to appropriate services.
- Invite a CLC or Presentation Team member to present this program at your chapter by making a request through Beta Base. Talking about mental health is the best way to combat that stigma that often accompanies these illnesses.
- Who do you need to **say something** to when you return to your chapter?