Recognizing a Need for Support

We all face challenging moments in our lives from time to time, but are you concerned that a family member, friend, or coworker needs professional help?

If someone you care about is struggling, you may have noticed some of the following:

- Extreme sleep or appetite changes
- Decreased interest in personal care
- Extreme mood changes, including lows and highs
- Withdrawal from social or once preferred activities
- Decrease in performance at work, school, sports and normal tasks
- Decreased concentration, memory, thought and speech is hard to follow
- Increased sensitivity to sights, sounds, smell and touch
- General apathy for all activities
- Feeling disconnected from oneself or one’s surrounding
- Odd or illogical thinking about personal abilities or influence
- Fear or nervousness of others or strong nervous feelings
- Peculiar behavior
- Substance abuse
- Ongoing physical ailments

Someone who is experiencing several of these symptoms needs to be seen by a physician or mental health professional. To start a supportive conversation, you can ask questions like: I’ve been worried about you, can we talk?; I’m someone who cares and wants to listen – would you want to talk to me?; It seems like you’re having a hard time – can I help you find help?

How to offer support:

- Reserve judgement and accusations and just listen
- Find out if the person is getting the care that s/he needs and if not, connect him or her to help
- Express your concern and support, that you are there and care
- Remind them there is help available and whatever the problem, it can be treated
- When the topic of mental health comes up, ask questions, listen to ideas, and be responsive
- Help reinforce their strengths, skills, and accomplishments
- Offer to help with everyday tasks
- Include them in your plans
- Offer to take them to an evaluation, appointment or support group
- Never ignore comments about suicide. If this comes up, ask the person if they have thought about harming themselves or others. If they have, are they thinking of this now? If yes, they need immediate help (call 911), especially if they will not let you monitor them or come up with a plan for safety.

For additional assistance, call KEPRO, your free and confidential Employee Assistance Program.

Source: American Psychiatric Association (www.apa.org), National Alliance on Mental Illness (www.nami.org), MentalHealth.gov