

# Does Your Loved One Need an Intervention?

## Objective

To identify the signs a loved one may require mental health treatment and conduct an intervention.

## What to Know

Mental health struggles are at an all-time high. Many people occasionally experience heightened stress, anxiety, or sadness, but sometimes symptoms worsen to the point that daily functioning is impacted. Paying attention to your loved one's mental health and overall well-being is crucial – and assessing whether it is time to for a behavioral intervention.

If you are concerned about a loved one, it is important to understand the signs that they need help. Here are some initial behaviors and symptoms you might notice.

- 1. Inability to handle stress.** Look for changes in your loved one's ability to handle the stressors of daily life. Are they having a harder time maintaining a schedule than they did before? Are they struggling to keep up with responsibilities?
- 2. Extreme tiredness or fatigue.** Ongoing fatigue might be a sign your loved one needs help. How often do they talk about feeling extremely tired? Do they seem constantly exhausted?
- 3. Lack of care for physical appearance or personal hygiene.** When there are mental health challenges, physical appearance and personal hygiene sometimes begin to slip.
- 4. Problems meeting responsibilities.** Perhaps you have noticed your loved one's performance at work or school has declined. Inconsistent attendance, reduced productivity, incomplete assignments, and overall inattention are potential signs your loved one needs help.
- 5. Unexplained absences or disappearances.** You do not need to be overbearing or start keeping track of everywhere they go but take note of the times they spend without contacting anyone.
- 6. Lack of interest in activities or hobbies they once enjoyed.** Losing interest in pleasurable activities and hobbies is often a sign of a decline in mental health.
- 7. Withdrawing from friends and family and social isolation.** Sometimes people with mental health problems withdraw from loves ones and avoid social events.
- 8. Increase in substance use.** Some people use alcohol or other substances to reduce the discomfort associated with mental health problems – often making things worse.
- 9. Unexpected and erratic mood swings or bursts of anger.** Dramatic mood swings, excessive frustration, and angry outbursts are all signs your loved one needs help.

How do you know if it is an urgent situation? Your loved one:

- gets into legal trouble.

- is in danger of losing a job or failing school.
- is functioning in such a way that others are suffering significant emotional distress.
- is unable to follow through on promises.
- chronically lies.
- seems to be controlled by unhealthy behaviors.
- blames others for causing their problems.
- is grandiose, delusional, or paranoid.
- becomes physically or emotionally abusive.
- exhibits suicidal ideation or behavior.
- is out of control or displays manic behavior.

If your loved one is exhibiting the above symptoms or behaviors, it might be time for an intervention, which involves presenting data, facts, and information in a caring, honest, supportive, and non-blaming way. This technique is intended to motivate a person to seek help. The intervention focuses on the problem behavior(s) and how it impacts others, their home life, work/school, or the community.

An intervention:

- provides specific examples of unhealthy behaviors or concerning symptoms and their impact on your loved one, family, and friends.
- includes clear steps, goals, and guidelines.
- describes what each person will do if your loved one refuses to get help.

As information is presented during the intervention, you might say, "I'm (We are) here because I/we love you (or care about you) and I/we want you to get help." You and the other intervenors (relatives, friends, religious leader, and so on) share feelings about the specific behaviors and negative consequences that will occur if the person does not seek help. The intervenors explain that they are no longer willing to function as enablers, "fixers," or rescuers. A mental health professional can provide stability, additional resources, and mediation if necessary.

This worksheet will help you create a script and conduct a behavioral intervention with your loved one.

## **What to Do**

First, answer the following questions.

Why do you think your loved one needs help?

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Why do you think you (and the other intervenors) need to take action to get this person help?

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Identify the problem behavior(s) and/or symptoms your loved one needs help with.

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Identify ultimatums (if any) or consequences if the person chooses not to seek help.

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Next, prepare a behavioral intervention script and invite relevant people to contribute.

Who will be involved?

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The intervention will be conducted like a meeting with an agenda. Each person (intervenor) will review their concerns during the meeting. Once everyone presents their concerns, each will offer tools, resources, suggestions, and so on to your loved. Finally, consequences or ultimatums are discussed if the person refuses to get help.

After you write the script, you will rehearse it with the other intervenors before the meeting.

Reason for the meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date of planned meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

Concerns/specific examples: \_\_\_\_\_

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Community and/or online resources (e.g., support groups like Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, treatment or recovery centers, licensed mental health professionals, etc.):

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Ultimatums/consequences if your loved one refuses to seek help:

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How will you cope if your loved one refuses to get help?

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Next, conduct the intervention. Describe what happened.

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How did your loved one react? Are they willing to get help? Why or why not?

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Follow up/next steps:

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**Reflections on This Exercise**

Was the intervention a success? Why or why not?

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What did you feel and think during the intervention?

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Did you experience any challenges while completing this activity? What was hard? Easy? Explain.

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How helpful was this exercise? \_\_\_\_\_  
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn during this exercise?

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