How do you tell if you or a friend might need some help?

The first thing to know is that seeking help is a sign of strength. If you're worried or concerned, go with your gut, ask for help! This is never a wrong decision. Truly, seeing a professional can really help.

Recognizing the signs and symptoms of mental health disorders can help you help yourself or others to get the care that they need. Here are 12 signs you might notice in yourself or a friend, that may be reason for concern. They are certainly reason for you to talk with someone about what you're feeling:

1. Feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness, depressed mood, poor self esteem or guilt
2. Withdrawal from friends, family and activities that used to be fun
3. Changes in eating or sleeping patterns
   1. Are you sleeping all the time? Or having trouble falling asleep?
   2. Are you gaining weight or never hungry?
4. Anger, rage, or craving for revenge
   1. Sometimes people notice they are overreacting to criticism
5. Feeling tired or exhausted all of the time
6. Trouble concentrating, thinking, remember or making decisions
   1. Are you suddenly struggling in school?
   2. Sometimes academic performance suffers and grades drop
7. Restless, irritable, agitated or anxious movements or behaviors
8. Regular crying
9. Neglect of personal care
   1. Have you stopped caring about your appearance or stopped keeping up with your personal hygiene?
10. Reckless or impulsive behaviors
    1. Are you drinking or using drugs excessively?
    2. Are you behaving unsafely in other ways?
11. Persistent physical symptoms such as headaches, digestive problems or chronic pain that do not respond to routine treatment
12. Thoughts about death or suicide *

A large portion of college students have thoughts of suicide at some point in their undergraduate years. If you are feeling this way, you are not alone. But although these feelings can be common, there is no reason you have to suffer from them. As soon as you start feeling out of the ordinary, you deserve to seek help.

There is not one way people look and feel when they have depression or a different mental health disorder. Some people show behavioral changes - liking sleeping through class or staying in their dorm rooms - other might show physical signs, like slouched posture or constant headaches. Mental health concerns can look different in guys and girls. But, if you recognize any of the above 12 signs for more than several days in yourself or a friend, getting help is likely to be especially important and effective.

For more information about Active Minds at SF State, email acminds@sfsu.edu