

MOMENTUM

Recovery

signs of the struggle

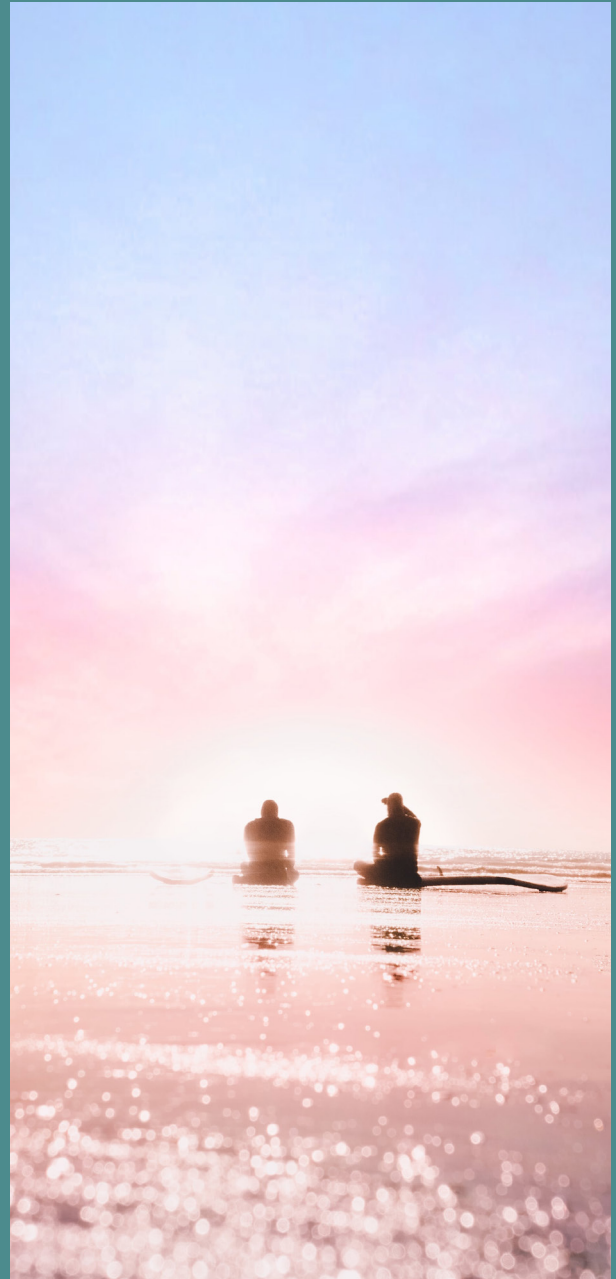
A photograph of two young women sitting on a beach, laughing joyfully. They are looking towards the right, where the sun is setting behind the ocean. The woman on the left has long, dark, curly hair and is wearing a light-colored jacket. The woman on the right has dark hair and is wearing a plaid shirt. The background shows a sunset sky with clouds and the ocean.

Checklists to Recognize
Substance Abuse or Mental
Health Issues in a Loved One

You couldn't say exactly when it started. But day by day, week by week, your daughter, brother, cousin, nephew, or best friend has slowly transformed into a new person — one that you don't recognize. Sadly, external symptoms are often one of the last signs that someone is experiencing an internal struggle. If your loved one is battling substance abuse or mental health issues, how can you recognize the problem — and help to solve it — as early as possible?

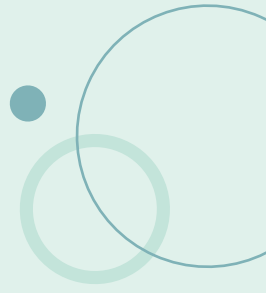
Recognizing substance abuse or mental health difficulties in a loved one is complicated by the cloud of denial. In itself, denial is a symptom of many behavioral health challenges. Your loved one may be driven by a compulsion to hide, deny, or minimize the true extent of their substance abuse or mental health problems.

At the same time, addiction is a family disease, and many mental health disorders operate in a similar way as well. Just as your loved one is spinning a web of denial, you and other family members may be adding in your own denial to the mix. As much as you consciously believe you want to identify your loved one's issue, there are often underlying subconscious drives that may cause you to misinterpret what you're really seeing.



the denial issue

the denial issue



How to Get Clarity

The easiest way to take an objective look at your loved one's symptoms is by breaking them down in black and white. You may have your own ideas of what addiction or depression might look like. The true guide, however, is The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, which mental health professionals use to diagnose behavioral health issues including addiction. Only medical professionals can accurately diagnose these illnesses, and this ebook is not intended or implied to be a substitute for that professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. However, by understanding what it is that doctors, therapists, and psychiatrists look for, you may be able to get the clarity that you need to move forward and pursue professional treatment for your loved one.



The medical definition of substance abuse has evolved a lot over the years. Alcoholism first appeared in the DSM in 1952, for example — as a subset of “Sociopathic Personality Disturbance.” Today, we know that people who struggle with alcohol are not sociopaths. (Far from it!) Instead, the most recent version of the DSM, known as the DSM-5-TR, identifies signs of alcohol use disorder. What symptoms might be true of your loved one?

- Alcohol is often drunk in larger amounts or over a longer period than was intended.
- There has been a persistent desire or unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control alcohol use.
- A great deal of time is spent getting alcohol, drinking alcohol, or recovering from a drinking binge.
- There is a frequent craving to use alcohol.
- Drinking is having a negative impact at work, school, or in the home.
- Drinking is causing social or interpersonal problems.
- Important social, occupational, or recreational activities are given up or reduced because of alcohol use.
- Alcohol use occurs in or causes physically hazardous situations, like drunk driving.
- Alcohol use is continued despite knowing that it is causing negative physical or psychological effects.
- Tolerance has developed and there is a need for more alcohol to achieve the same level of intoxication.
- Withdrawal symptoms are experienced when drinking is stopped or reduced, or in between drinking sessions.

If your loved one exhibited two or more of these symptoms within the last year, they might have a problem. If you think that 4 or 5 apply, it could be a moderate case, and 6 or more indicates a serious problem according to the guide.

signs of
alcohol abuse



As with alcohol use disorder, mild substance use disorder generally includes two or three of these symptoms.

People with moderate substance use disorder generally show four to five, and severe substance use disorder includes even more.

Similarly, substance abuse — or “addiction” — is gathered under the umbrella diagnosis of substance use disorder. These are the diagnostic criteria from the DSM-5-TR:

- Consuming the drug of choice in larger amounts or for a longer amount of time than originally intended
- Showing an ongoing desire to cut down or regulate use, or failing to do so
- Spending more and more time obtaining, using, or recovering from the effects of the substance
- Experiencing cravings for the substance
- Having issues at work, school, or home
- Experiencing problems in relationships
- Spending less time on activities that were once enjoyed
- Putting oneself at physical risk in order to obtain the substance
- Ongoing substance use despite knowing that it may make physical or psychological problems like depression worse
- Developing a tolerance that requires increasingly higher doses of the substance to achieve the desired effect
- Experiencing withdrawal symptoms when the use of the substance is reduced or stopped. No documented withdrawal symptoms from hallucinogens, PCP, or inhalants

signs of
substance use

signs of depression

Depression in young adults has skyrocketed post-COVID. Yet, it often goes unnoticed or dismissed as the normal moodiness of a developing adult. There are several key symptoms to look out for if you think a loved one may be suffering from depression. The DSM-5-TR lays out the following criteria:

- Seemingly in a depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day
- Noticeably decreased interest or pleasure in activities
- Significant weight or appetite changes
- Obviously slower thought process or physical movement
- Near daily fatigue
- Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt nearly every day
- Reduced ability to think or concentrate, nearly every day
- Recurrent thoughts of death or suicidal ideation



Experiencing five or more of these symptoms in a two-week period can be an indication of depression, as long as depressed mood or decreased interest in activities is also observed.

Almost one in five Americans experienced anxiety disorder in the last year, with 22 % of those being young adults aged 18 to 29. Was your son, daughter, or sibling one of them? Familiarize yourself with these diagnostic criteria:

- Anxiety and worry about a variety of topics, events, or activities, occurring more often than not for at least six months.
- Finding it difficult to stop worrying about a variety of topics

That anxiety and worry must also be accompanied by at least three physical or mental symptoms in order to classify as Generalized Anxiety Disorder.

Typical symptoms are:

- Restlessness
- Fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability
- Unexplained muscle aches or soreness
- Issues sleeping (difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking up easily)



signs of generalized anxiety disorder

is something else wrong?

While less common than the disorders outlined here, PTSD, bipolar disorder, borderline personality disorder, and other mental health issues are on the rise among young adults. If you've witnessed changes in your loved one and don't understand what is going on, contact a mental health professional for insight.



The only way for your loved one to receive an accurate diagnosis is for him or her to enter professional treatment. In residential substance abuse and mental health treatment, a team of experts can work together to identify the underlying issues causing your loved one trouble in their life. From there, they will develop a customized treatment plan for 24/7 care and healing. At the same time, the residential treatment community can provide the understanding, support, and sense of belonging that your loved one may be currently lacking.

No matter what you checked on this guide, call our caring admissions team for insight. They will listen to your story and provide their own feedback on your situation and the best steps forward.

You don't have to navigate this process alone, and recovery is possible for your loved one. No matter what, they have the capacity to be happier, to be better, and to belong.



888-513-5049

MomentumRecovery.com

5027 Wrightsville Ave
Wilmington, NC 28403

how to
get help