

# The five signs of suffering: Know the symptoms and ask for help

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The suicides of Kate Spade and Anthony Bourdain are poignant reminders that friends, neighbors, coworkers, and even family members may be suffering emotionally and don't recognize the symptoms or won't ask for help.

Check out these five signs that may mean that someone close to you is in emotional pain and may need help:

- **Their personality changes.** You may notice sudden or gradual changes in the way that someone typically behaves. He or she may behave in ways that don't seem to fit the person's values, or the person may just seem different.
- **They seem uncharacteristically angry, anxious, agitated, or moody.** You may notice the person has more frequent problems controlling his or her temper and seems irritable or unable to calm down. People in more extreme situations like this may be unable to sleep or may explode in anger at minor problems.
- **They withdraw or isolate themselves from other people.** Someone who used to be socially engaged may pull away from family and friends and stop taking part in activities they used to enjoy. In more severe cases the person may start failing to make it to work or school.
- **They stop taking care of themselves and may engage in risky behavior.** You may notice a change in the person's level of personal care or an act of poor judgment on his or her part.
- **They seem overcome with hopelessness and overwhelmed by their circumstances.** That person may be suffering from extreme or prolonged grief, or feelings of worthlessness or guilt. People in this position may say that the world would be a better place without them.

## What do you do if someone you know is suffering?

You can connect with them, reach out, and offer them your help. Showing compassion and caring to help find a solution when a person may not have the will or drive to help themselves can go a long way.

Aetna Chairman and CEO Mark Bertolini [recently shared his struggles](#) following a skiing accident that left him in “incredible” pain and, in his darkest days, contemplating suicide.

[Learn more](#) about what you can do to help someone. Check out these three [animation videos](#) from the Campaign to Change Direction detailing several of the signs of suffering.