

How can you tell if you need psychotherapy? Dr. Rubin gives 50 "warning signals."

Do you need psychiatric help? Do your problems require professional attention, or will they simply go away by themselves in time? These are important questions, well worth asking, though the answers are somewhat complex.

Generally speaking, I think anyone who wants help should consult a qualified therapist. Be wary of the advice of well-meaning friends, relatives—even family doctors. They may discourage you for reasons of their own, such as deeply-buried personal problems or a desire to play amateur psychiatrist.

The initial consultation—or several visits—will help you to decide what course of action, if any, you should take. You should consult an expert with the maximum amount of training. My own bias is toward psychiatrists (M.D.'s) and clinical psychologists (Ph.D.'s) who have graduated from psychoanalytical institutes recognized by either The American Psychoanalytical Association or The American Academy of Psychoanalysis.

I have listed below 50 "warning signals" that indicate a need for professional help. All of us experience some of these symptoms from time to time; the question is, are they debilitating? Are they interfering with healthy functioning at work or in personal relationships? If so, you will probably benefit from help if one or more of the following problems plagues you:

1. Insomnia or sudden and sustained restlessness.
2. Gross weight loss or weight gain despite the absence of physical findings.
3. Such symptoms as undue digestive disturbances, asthmatic attacks, migraine headaches, irregular heart beats, when an internist has ruled out physical causes.
4. Chronic destructive relationships—especially sadomasochistic ones.
5. Inability to keep a job.
6. General underachievement.
7. Phobias or fears of unknown origin.
8. An uncontrollable compulsion to perform certain acts or rituals without knowing why.
9. The inability to say "no" and general difficulty in asserting one's self.
10. Addictions—food, alcohol, drugs and tobacco.
11. Sexual difficulties.
12. Chronic boredom and inability to "find one's self."
13. Unusual difficulty in making decisions.
14. Chronic or severe anxiety.
15. Depression.
16. Excessive attacks of guilt and an overwhelming, inappropriate sense of responsibility.
17. Chronic frustration.
18. Undue shyness.
19. Excessive jealousy, envy and over-protectiveness (of spouse or child).
20. Hyper-irritability and chronic fighting

over nonexistent issues.

21. Inability to express anger and/or other feelings.

22. Inability to feel pleasure and to enjoy leisure.

23. Withdrawal from others, and inability to

sustain friendships.

24. Chronic bad judgment, leading to frequent legal entanglements.

25. Accident proneness.

26. Any loss of mental function: memory, ability to think clearly, orientation in time, place or person.

27. Sudden and pronounced change in personality and behavior.

28. Over-talking and over-activity.

29. Suicidal and/or murderous preoccupations.

30. Obsessive, unreasonable worrying.

31. Feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy despite genuine reassurances to the contrary.

32. Heightened suspiciousness and fear of people.

33. Dread of new situations or undue and unusual fear of change.

34. Inability to accept the aging process.

35. Heightened and sustained cynicism and bitterness.

36. Hallucinations (hearing voices or seeing things).

37. General feelings of discontent and unhappiness without being able to find appropriate reasons.

38. Poor tolerance of frustration.

39. Preoccupation with illness and death.

40. Preoccupation with the possibility of sudden disaster—war, illness, loss of job, death, etc.

41. Sudden and inexplicable attraction, preoccupation and infatuation with much younger person or persons.

42. Marked decrease in ability to function.

43. Marked perfectionism in many areas, leading to chronic disappointment and resignation.

44. Inability to realistically limit expectations of self and others, leading to chronic hurt and disappointment.

45. A constant feeling of being abused by others.

46. Inability to spend money or otherwise be kind to one's self.

47. Chronic feelings of martyrdom.

48. Disturbed relationships due to vindictiveness and arrogance in regards to others.

49. Apparently sudden loss of one's sense of humor.

50. Exclusive fascination with tragedy.