

# Signs that could mean a friend isn't OK

It isn't always easy to know whether someone is OK, particularly if they haven't talked about it. However, there are some signs you can look for which could indicate that a friend or family member may need your support.

## What causes problems?

A whole range of different things can lead people to feel low. It can be a combination of different things, including:

- Going through something stressful
- Experiencing grief or loss
- Being around people going through tough times
- Arguing with someone
- Problems at school
- Big life changes e.g. moving house
- Caring for someone who's unwell
- Being bored
- Having a medical condition or chronic illness
- Not sleeping well
- Not exercising enough

## When to bring it up

It's a good idea to check in with a mate about how they're doing if:

- They've been showing signs of being in a low mood for a couple of weeks or longer
- You notice their mood is having an impact on how you behave towards them
- They're not enjoying life
- You're worried about their safety
- They start to miss school or work, or don't want to hang out with people and do their favourite activities

## What signs should I look out for?

Going through difficult times can have a really big impact on a person's life, including on their:

- Relationships with other people
- Physical health
- Emotional health

So, it's a great idea to be aware of certain behaviours and signs that can indicate a mate or a family member might be going through something. The first thing to look out for is signs of a low mood and the second thing to keep an eye on is the length of time someone seems down.

## What are the signs of a low mood?

When people feel low, they often:

- Withdraw from their friends or family
- Lash out at people and become angry or upset really easily, even towards people they care about
- Cry or become emotional
- Lose interest in activities and things they usually love
- Have changed sleeping patterns. They might be sleeping all the time, not sleeping much at all, or sleeping at strange hours (such as in the middle of the day)
- Have a changed appetite. They could be eating more than usual or less.

## How do I know they need help?

If someone's been showing a few or all of the signs of a low mood for two weeks or more, it could mean they're not OK and need support. Talk to your doctor, a school counsellor or an adult you trust about how to help them

