



Indicators of Emotional Disturbance

There are three types of indicators that will help in identifying that a person is emotionally disturbed.

Verbal Clues

Illogical thoughts

Loose associations (expressing a combination of unrelated or abstract topics

- Grandiose ideas (expressing thoughts of greatness, e.g. person believes self to be Jesus)
- Ideas of persecution (expressing ideas of being harassed or threatened, e.g. CIA monitoring thoughts through the TV. set)
- Obsessive Thoughts (preoccupation, often with death, germs, guilt)

Unusual Speech Patterns

- Nonsensical speech or chatter
- Word repetition (frequently stating the same or rhyming words or phrases, i.e. "sing- a- song a - ding - dong")
- Pressured speech (expressing an urgency in manner of speaking)
- Extremely slow speech

Verbal Hostility or Excitement

- Talking excitedly or loudly
- Argumentative, belligerent, unreasonably hostile
- Threatening harm

Environmental Cues

Surroundings are inappropriate such as:

Decorations

- Strange trimmings; inappropriate use of household items (aluminum foil covering a window)

Waste Matter/Trash

- "Pack ratting"; accumulation of trash (hoarding string; newspapers; paper bags; clutter)
- Presence of feces or urine on the floor or walls

Behavioral clues

Physical Appearance

- Inappropriate to environment (e.g. shorts in winter, heavy clothes in summer)
- Bizarre clothing or makeup

Bodily Movements

- Strange posture or mannerisms (e.g. continuously looking over shoulder as if being followed; holding unusual body positions for a long time)
- Lethargic, sluggish movements
- Pacing, agitation
- Repetitious, ritualistic movements

Responding to voices or objects that aren't there

Confusion about or unawareness of surroundings

Lack of emotional Response

Causing injury to self (e.g. cutting self with sharp object, cigarette burns to the body)

Non-Verbal expressions of sadness or grief

Inappropriate emotional reactions

- Over reacting to situation on an overly angry or frightened way
- Reacting with opposite of expected emotions (e.g. laughing at auto accident)

When making observations;

1. Note as many cues as possible;
2. Put the cues into the context of the situation;
3. Be mindful of environmental and cultural factors