

Levels of Care: When Should You Seek Mental Health Treatment



The Mecca of Black Wellness



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It is important to distinguish between when professional mental health treatment may be helpful and when mental health treatment is strongly indicated. Review the list below to find examples of **Minimal**, **Moderate**, and **Severe** symptoms.

Level 1: Minimal Symptoms

Individuals at this level may notice an emergence of new symptoms and changes. This can include small changes in your mood, emotions, or behaviors.

- Life stressors and life transitions
- Parenting challenges
- Family changes (moving, divorce)
- Grief
- Marital and relationship difficulties
- Identity development, challenges, exploration
- Stress management
- Problem solving and conflict resolution
- Minimal academic concerns

Level 2: Moderate Symptoms that Require Mental Health Treatment

Individuals at this level may notice that changes in your mood, emotions, or behaviors are beginning to impact your overall functioning. This could be evidenced by a decline in functioning (school or job performance, difficulty completing tasks that were easily completed before), increased emotional changes (crying), behavioral changes (withdrawn, lack of engagement in activities), or health changes (changes in sleep, eating, drinking alcohol or using substances more).

- Changes in mood, interests and engagement with others
- Disrupted sleep patterns (sleeping too much or too little)
- Detachment
- Feeling numb
- Excessive worries and difficulty relaxing
- Reliving experiences from the past (nightmares, intrusive memories)
- Difficulty focusing or concentrating on tasks
- Persistent hopelessness
- Uncontrollable rage or anger
- Risky behaviors
- Increased alcohol or substance use
- Persistent low mood

Level 3: Severe Symptoms that Require Immediate Mental Health Treatment

Individuals with symptoms at this level may require an immediate evaluation by a licensed mental health professional.

- Suicidal thoughts and/or behaviors
- Homicidal thoughts and/or behaviors
- Feeling that there is no way out
- Thoughts of hurting yourself or others
- Looking for ways to hurt yourself or others
- Frequent talks about death or dying
- Hearing, seeing, or feeling things that are not there
- Uncontrollable thoughts about death or dying
- Difficulty completing daily tasks (getting out of bed, showering, eating)
- Extremes in mood (highs vs. lows)

If you are experiencing several of the symptoms listed, contact your primary care doctor or healthcare provider to discuss your current symptoms and mental health treatment options. This may include a referral for individual therapy (talk therapy or counseling) with a mental health professional and/or a referral to a psychiatrist for medication management.

Resources to Identify Licensed Mental Health Professionals

- **Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator:** <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>
The Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator is a resource for individuals seeking treatment in the United States or U.S. Territories for both substance use and/or mental health problems.
- **Psychology Today:** www.PsychologyToday.com
Psychology Today's Therapy Directory lists clinical professionals, psychiatrists and treatment centers who provide mental health services in the US and internationally.
- **Therapy for Black Girls:** www.TherapyForBlackGirls.com
Therapy for Black Girls is an online space dedicated to encouraging the mental wellness of Black women and girls.
- **Zoc Doc:** www.ZocDoc.com
With Zocdoc, you can see doctors' open appointment times and book instantly online, make informed choices with verified reviews, and stay on top of important checkups with tailored reminders.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Resources During Crisis or Distress

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Visit, <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/> or dial 1-888-628-9454 to speak to someone.

The Veterans Crisis Line

The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. Responders will work with you to help you get through any personal crisis, even if that crisis does not involve thoughts of suicide. Dial 1-800-273-8255 and (Press 1) to talk to someone now. A confidential chat is also available online or through text. To chat online (<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/ChatTermsOfService.aspx>) or send a text to 838255 to receive confidential support anonymously.

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