



Warning Signs of Potentially Impairing Illnesses in Professionals

Symptoms of Substance Abuse/Chemical Dependency:

Smell of alcohol on breath or in perspiration
Red-faced and/or prominent capillaries over cheeks and nose
Bloodshot and/or glassy eyes, excessive use of eye drops, sunglasses indoors
Constricted or dilated pupils
Sweating in a comfortable room
Self-medicating, has medical problems and does not seek help, but treats self
Memory lapses (Blackouts)
Deterioration in reliability
Slow, slurred, or pressured speech
Avoids close contact or interactions with others, avoids eye contact
Lying
Erratic behavior patterns, mood swings, inappropriate affect
Tremors, hands shake
Does not answer when on call or does not return pages
Misses work frequently or is late frequently
Defensive and/or minimizing regarding alcohol and/or drug consumption – denial
Persistent financial, marital, or familial problems
History of alcohol or substance abuse by self or family
Excessive use of fragrance and/or breath spray/gum
Possession of alcohol or drugs at work
Alcohol in car or empty alcohol containers in car on a regular basis
Known to frequent bars/clubs on a regular basis
Frequently associates with known alcohol or substance users/abusers
Low or elevated self-esteem
Poor impulse control, hasty, impatient
Easily agitated, irritable

Psychiatric Conditions:

Self-medicating, has medical problems and does not seek help, but rather treats self
Erratic behavior patterns, mood swings, inappropriate affect
Low or elevated self-esteem
Poor impulse control, hasty, impatient
Easily agitated, irritable
Psychosomatic, hypochondriasis

Paranoia
Insomnia, hypersomnia
Anxious, avoidant, making excuses to avoid various duties secondary to anxiety
Depressed, flat affect
Manic Affect
Distorted thinking, delusional, hallucinations, disconnected thoughts
Isolated, withdrawn
Denial, minimizes having problems
Suicidal ideation or previous attempt
Pattern of extreme risk-taking behavior
Misses work frequently or is late frequently
Reputation of bizarre or otherwise extreme behavior
Passive-aggressive and/or manipulative behavior

Distressed (Disruptive) Behavior:

Abrasive interpersonal style of interaction / verbally abusive
Passive-aggressive and/or manipulative behavior
Appearance of never being happy or satisfied
Apathetic, pessimistic, believes things will never improve
Bizarre, unusual behavior
Temper tantrums, may throw things, abusive and/or foul language
Often grandiose, elevated self-esteem
Never wrong
Belittles, shames subordinates who feel manipulated and controlled
Sees self as champion and others as less able and less capable
Does not respond well to redirection – feels entitled and feels others are jealous
Is threatening, verbally abusive
Often overreacts
Very low tolerance for others, while expecting others to have great tolerance for them
Often acts with disregard for rules and consequences, feels entitled to do so
Often complains and is often complained about, especially by subordinates, for rude or otherwise unacceptable behavior
Denies wrongdoing, lacks insight, and refuses to make changes in behavior

Caution: Any of these symptoms or behaviors- occurring in isolation - do not constitute impairment. When taken together and occurring over time, a pattern emerges that indicates impairment or a potentially impairing condition. Some forms of extreme behaviors, i.e. assault or overt intoxication, can be so egregious as to warrant evaluation in and of themselves. In addition, impairing conditions frequently overlap.