

# Recognizing Signs of Mental Health Distress in Your Older Adult Relative: A Caregiver's Guide

Depression, stress, or anxiety are mental conditions that affect people of all races and ages. However, talking about these issues is often harder for Asians because of strong cultural stigma against mental illness. In our cultures, many older adults see mental health issues as a weakness, shame, or dishonor to the family, and may feel embarrassed to admit emotional or psychological distress. As your parents and grandparents age, they may tell you about their physical health problems, but mental health distress may be viewed as a weakness or personal failure. As a result, many Asians may hesitate to burden family members with their problems, and attribute them instead to unharmonious emotions or lack of faith.

## 6 Signs of Mental Health Distress in Older Adults

### Loss of Interest



No interest in spending time with friends, socializing, or activities they may have previously enjoyed

### Eating & Appetite Issues



Loss of appetite, overeating, sudden weight loss or gain

### Unexplained Symptoms



Complaints of muscle tension, pain, headaches, insomnia, or other physical issues that are not related to a physical illness

### Sad Most of the Time



Long periods of feeling sad, inactivity, sleeping all the time

### Misuse of Substances



Sudden increased consumption of substances like tobacco, cigarettes or alcohol, or excessive gambling

### Negative Thinking



Excessive worrying, expressing thoughts about being tired of life, or not wanting to live