

TEEN BEHAVIORS

FORMING THEIR OWN IDENTITY

Teens are figuring out who they are and what they believe.

Typical teen behavior might include:

- Spending more time with friends and less time with family.
- Spending more time in their room alone.
- Trying out different personal styles (clothing, hair, makeup, etc.).
- Trying out different hobbies or having shifting interests.
- Experimenting with alcohol or drugs.

Signs of a problem might include:

- Complete withdrawal from parents and family.
- Forming a habit of using drugs or alcohol. Or a teen may show signs of a substance use disorder. These signs include things like having problems with school, work, or relationships because of drugs or alcohol.

EXPLORING CLOSENESS IN RELATIONSHIPS

Part of becoming an adult means learning how to have intimate relationships. These could be close friendships with intimate emotions. Or they might be romantic relationships with sexual intimacy.

Typical teen behavior may include:

- Having intense friendships.
- Being very influenced by peers.
- Focusing intensely on a "crush" or love interest.
- Being more curious about sex and intimacy. Or teens may explore physical intimacy through dating and sex.

Signs of a problem might include:

- A sudden change in peer group. This is especially true if the new group seems to be a negative influence.
- Risky sexual behavior. A teen may have many sex partners at the same time. Or they may have a string of sexual relationships that don't last long.

ADJUSTING TO BODY CHANGE

The teen years are a time of lots of physical changes. It can take some time for your teen to get used to their maturing body.

Some typical behaviors may include:

- Taking a long time to get ready to go out.
- Being more focused on how they look and how others look.
- Acting shy or self-conscious.

Signs of a problem might include:

- Being very critical of their body or how they look.
- Overeating regularly, restricting food, or purging.

SHOWING MORE INDEPENDENCE

Teens often start pushing away from their parents so they can start to make their own decisions about what they do and how they want to be.

Typical teen behavior might include:

- Testing boundaries and breaking rules.
- Not wanting help from their parents.
- Not wanting to share what's going on in their lives.
- Rejecting things they enjoyed or cared about in childhood.
- Having mood swings or arguing a lot.

Signs of a problem might include:

- Running away from home.
- Refusing to go to school, or skipping classes.
- Having temper outbursts that become violent.
- Being moody, anxious, or withdrawn beyond what seems typical for your teen. Or they may seem to feel sad or "down" more days than not.
- Self-harming or talking about suicide. If this happens with your teen, get help from a counselor. If it's an emergency, call 911.

SIGNS YOUR TEEN IS STRUGGLING

While it's normal for your teen to demonstrate some of these behaviors, if you notice they demonstrate a combination of them, your student may be in crisis.

CHANGES IN BEHAVIOR. Mood swings, irritability, and withdrawal.

CHANGES IN SLEEP PATTERNS. They have trouble falling to sleep or staying asleep.

DECLINE IN ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE. Changes in grades or effort towards academics.

LOSS OF INTEREST IN PREVIOUSLY ENJOYED ACTIVITIES. Little or no enthusiasm for activities and hobbies they used to enjoy.

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS. Headaches, fatigue, stomachaches, etc. Especially if the symptoms do not respond to treatment.

SOCIAL WITHDRAWAL. Isolating themselves from friends and family.

EMOTIONAL VOLATILITY. Reactions out of proportion to the situation.

CHANGES IN APPETITE. Little to no eating. Purging or binge eating.

WHEN TO GET HELP FROM A PROFESSIONAL

THOUGHTS OF DEATH OR SUICIDE

- If you are concerned that your teen is considering suicide: ask, "Have you ever thought about killing or hurting yourself?" If they say yes, ask "Do you have a plan for how you would do it?" and "Have you put your plan into place?" and "Do you intend to carry out this plan?"
- If your teen is having thoughts but no plan or intent then finding and scheduling an appointment with a therapist is the next best step.
- If a teen answers yes to two or more of these questions, further help should be sought for crisis. If they answer yes to the intent question, then a crisis line should be called or they should be taken to a crisis center immediately

SELF-HARM.

A number of teen self-harm in an attempt to manage powerful emotions. Teens cut for a number of reasons: to relief emotional pain, to stave off suicide, to feel alive again, to counter feelings of invisibility, or as an avoidance strategy. If your teen is engaging in self-harm, seek help from licensed therapist.

Signs Your Teen May Be Self-Harming:

- An abnormal number of cuts/burns on the wrists, arms, legs, hips or stomach
- A habit of wearing of long sleeves and pants even in warm weather
- Razors or knives left in strange locations
- Your teen locked away for long periods of time in their bedroom or bathroom
- Frequent 'accidents' that cause physical injury
- Stories or actual evidence that your teenager's friends are self-mutilating
- Reluctance to be part of a social circle or social event

24 hour crisis centers:

Red Rock- 405-425-0333

Northcare- 405-858-2700

Help Finding a Therapist: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists>

RESOURCES

Call the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988

Call 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)

Text HOME to 741741 to access the Crisis Text Line