

EAS/Employee Assistance Services

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Children: When To Seek Help

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Younger Children

- Fall in school performance
- Poor grades in school despite trying very hard
- A lot of worry or anxiety
- Hyperactivity; fidgeting
- Persistent nightmares
- Persistent disobedience or aggression (longer than six months) and provocative opposition to authority figures
- Frequent, unexplainable temper tantrums

Teens

Sometimes parents are the first to recognize problems with their teen; sometimes they are the last to know. Parents who are concerned about a teen or pre-teen child can review the following checklist, provided by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP). If parents are concerned about their child, a thorough evaluation by a mental-health professional may be useful.

Marked change in school performance

- Abuse of alcohol or drugs

- Inability to cope with problems
- Inability to cope with daily activities
- Marked changes in sleeping habits
- Marked changes in eating habits
- Many complaints about physical ailments
- Aggressive behavior or frequent outbursts of anger
- Violation of others' rights
- Opposition to authority
- Truancy, theft, vandalism
- Intense fear of becoming obese (with no relationship to actual body weight)
- Depression (sustained negative mood and attitude, poor appetite, difficulty sleeping)

Teen Suicide Signs

Parents of teens need to be aware of the signs of suicide risk and know when to ask for professional help. Research cited by The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry reports that suicide among teens has risen dramatically in recent years. Suicide is the third leading cause of death for people ages 15 to 24 years.

Many of the symptoms of suicidal feelings are similar to the signs of depression. The AACAP recommends that, if one or more of these signs occur, parents need to talk to the child about

their concern and seek professional help if concerns persist.

- Change in sleeping habits
- Withdrawal from friends, family and regular activities
- Violent behavior
- Drug or alcohol use
- Unusual neglect of personal appearance
- Marked personality change
- Decline in schoolwork
- Difficulty concentrating
- High level of boredom
- Physical complaints (often related to emotions): stomachaches, headaches, fatigue

According to the AACAP, a teen who is contemplating suicide may also:

- Complain of being “rotten inside”
- Give verbal hints (“I won’t be a problem for you much longer”, “Nothing matters”.)
- Give away favorite possessions; throw away important belongings.

If a child or adolescent says “I want to kill myself”, always take that statement seriously and seek a professional evaluation immediately.

What Parents Should Ask

Parents are encouraged by AACAP to ask these questions if they are considering psychotherapy of their teen:

- 1.) Why is psychotherapy being recommended?
- 2.) What are some results I can expect ?
- 3.) How long will my child be in therapy?
- 4.) Will the family also be counseled?

- Change in eating habits

- 5.) How will we be informed about our child’s progress?
- 6.) How can our family help?

Resources:

1. “Understanding Teen Depression” by Emmppfield and Bakalar
2. “Overcoming Teen Depression: A Guide for Parents” by Miriam Kaufman, M.D.
3. American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry:
www.AACP.org

“And he said:

*Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of
Life’s longing for itself.*

*They come through you, but not from
you.*

*And though they are with you, they
belong not to you...you are the bow
from which your children as living
arrows are sent forth.”*

The Prophet
Kahlil Gibran