

Teen Mental Health Problems: Warning Signs

The teen years can be tough for both parent and child. Adolescents are under stress to be liked, do well in school, get along with their family and make important life decisions. Most of these pressures are unavoidable and worrying about them is natural. But if your teen is feeling extremely sad, hopeless or worthless, these could be warning signs of a mental health problem.

Is troubled by feeling:

- very angry most of the time, cries a lot or overreacts to things;
- worthless or guilty a lot;
- anxious or worried a lot more than other young people;
- grief for a long time after a loss or death;
- extremely fearful-has unexplained fears or more fears than most kids;
- constantly concerned about physical problems or appearance;
- frightened that his or her mind is controlled or is out of control.

Experiences big changes, for example:

- does much worse in school;
- loses interest in things usually enjoyed;
- has unexplained changes in sleeping or eating habits;
- avoids friends or family and wants to be alone all the time;
- daydreams too much and can't get things done;
- feels life is too hard to handle or talks about suicide;
- hears voices that cannot be explained.

Is limited by:

- poor concentration; can't make decisions;
- inability to sit still or focus attention;
- worry about being harmed, hurting others or about doing something "bad";
- the need to wash, clean things, or perform certain routines dozens of times a day;
- thoughts that race almost too fast to follow;
- persistent nightmares.

Behaves in ways that cause problems, for-example:

- uses alcohol or other drugs;
- eats large amounts of food then forces vomiting, uses laxatives or takes enemas to avoid weight-gain;
- continues to diet or exercise obsessively although bone-thin;
- often hurts other people, destroys property or breaks the law;
- does things that can be life threatening