

# Teens and Mental Health

<http://www.healthyminds.org/More-Info-For/Teens.aspx>



Teenage years can be stressful and challenging. Yet, you may wonder whether a teen is experiencing just the typical “growing pains” or a real mental health problem. While adolescence is a difficult time for many teens, there is a difference between “typical” and “troubled.” Mental health problems in teens are real, painful and, left untreated, can have serious consequences.

What you know and taking action will make a real difference in a teen's life. Research shows that if left untreated, mental health problems can become worse over time, affecting a teen's school performance, social and emotional life. However, mental health treatment can be effective for teens and the sooner these disorders are recognized, the greater the likelihood that treatment will be effective.

Adults close to teens – especially parents, teachers, coaches and school personnel – can learn to recognize the warning signs of mental health problems in teens, and refer the teen to a mental health professional. Effective mental health interventions and a positive school climate contribute to improved student achievement.

**AT HOME:** Parents are more likely to see some signs of mental health problems in their teenage children than anyone else.

**AT SCHOOL:** Teachers, coaches and other school personnel who interact with students every day, are in an excellent position to notice when students may be showing signs of mental health problems.

**IN THE COMMUNITY:** Neighbors or other adults in the community interact with teens in different settings than their parents or teachers do — at stores, places of worship or recreation centers — and can notice behaviors that parents and teachers might not see.

## **TAKE THESE STEPS:**

**NOTICE** - Notice the warning signs (see below) of mental health problems. The signs usually aren't one-time occurrences; they persist over several weeks.

**TALK** - If you see any of the warning signs, you can talk to the teen. Ask how he or she is doing, and be compassionate as you listen and respond.

**SHARE** - Make sure to share what you've seen and heard with someone who can. Make sure the teen gets help:

- The teen's parents
- A mental health professional at school or in the community
- A health professional (doctor, nurse) at school or in the community

About 11% of youth between 9 to 17 years old, approximately 4 million people, have a major mental health disorder that results in significant impairments at home, school or with peers. (Surgeon General, 2000)

Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death among 14 to 22 year olds (CDC, 2007)

The American Psychiatric Foundation, recognizing the important role adults can have in a teen's life, established the "Typical or Troubled?" school education program to encourage and equip adults (such as parents and teachers) who closely interact with teens to notice the warning signs of mental health problems and refer teens to help in addressing these issues. "You can make a difference."

Know when to seek mental health help for your Teen. Understand the difference between a "Typical" or "Troubled" Teen.

**For more information:**

Watch online episode of *Healthy Minds* 30-minute television program on  
"Teens: Typical or Troubled? Part Two – What You Need to Know"  
and  
"Teens: Typical or Troubled? Part Two – Suicide Prevention"

Source: American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry