**Mental Health and Teens: Five Danger Signs to Watch Out For**

by [Robert Myers, PhD](https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/authors/bobby/) | on June 23, 2014 | in [Child Development](https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/category/development/), [Child Psychology](https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/category/psychology/), [Family Building](https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/category/family-building/), [Parenting](https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/category/parenting/), [Safety Issues](https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/category/child-teen-safety-issues/)



The teenage years can be difficult ones. Teens are going through significant cognitive developments that can influence not only their behavior but also their mood. It’s a time when mental health issues can arise. Knowing what to look out for can help parents catch problems early on.

Extreme or Dramatic Changes in Behavior

Teens are known for moodiness and sudden shifts in behavior. So a one-time occurrence isn’t something to be too concerned about. However, if you notice that your child’s behavior has changed significantly, that’s a danger sign. It may be a symptom of mental illness or some other problematic situation like drug use. The following behavioral changes are red flags:

1. Sleeping Changes – A child may begin to sleep too much or not at all.

2. Dietary Changes – Pay special attention to children who seem to be eating significantly more than they used to or not eating at all. Bulimia and anorexia are dangerous conditions that both girls and boys can suffer from.

3. Social Changes – Most frequently, signs of depression include a child withdrawing from social outings. They may no longer hang out with friends or engage in social activities after school.

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4. Emotional Changes – While teens can be emotional, if you notice significant emotional outbursts or moodiness, it can be a sign that they’re dealing with a mental health condition.

5. Academic Changes – Have you noticed that her grades have plummeted or that he’s no longer interested in school? This can be a warning sign that they’re hanging out with the wrong people, abusing substances, or a mental health issue.

Related: [Teens Cutting and Other Self-Injurious Behavior in Children and Adolescents](https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/child-psychology/cutting-teens-children/)

Physical Dangers

A child who becomes aggressive and/or destructive is likely dealing with a mental health disorder. They may be silently hurting themselves, through behaviors like cutting or drugs, or they may be overt about it. Promiscuity, substance abuse, and suicidal thoughts or actions are all serious signs that a child is in danger.

What Do You Do Next?

If you notice any of these signs or changes in your teen, it’s important to talk to them and to be willing to get help. If a child is harming themselves or others, don’t try to handle it on your own. Professional help is essential. A trained professional can diagnose your teen and begin treatment immediately. They can also help you and your family become educated about your teen’s illness and provide counseling for you.