

Health & Well-being Mental Health Campaign

Teenagers and Mental Health Issues



Children act differently during the teenage years. It is common to worry that they may be affected by mental health issues. Teenage behaviour can be erratic and unpredictable, so it can be difficult to distinguish when they are just 'being a teenager' and when something more serious is going on. There are however certain warning signs to look out for.

- a teenager who is usually very sociable, withdraws socially to a large degree
- a teenager who is normally very chatty and then become completely uncommunicative

Most teenagers become moody and uncommunicative from time to time. This is often due to hormonal changes, which make the teenage years an emotional time. Many teenagers haven't yet developed the skills to talk about emotions, so communication becomes very difficult. Teenagers also have to go through a process of setting themselves physically and emotionally apart from their parents. Direct questioning can make them feel very threatened, so a more subtle approach is more effective.

Spotting the signs of abnormal teen behaviour - Many of the symptoms listed below can often be attributed to normal teenage behaviour. However, it can be helpful to know the signs of a possible problem. Depression in teenagers - Noticeable symptoms of depression in teenagers can include:

- continuous low mood or sadness
- voicing/showing feelings of hopelessness and helplessness
- frequent tearfulness
- being irritable and intolerant of others
- apparent lack of energy or motivation, and little or no enjoyment of things that were once interesting to them
- slowed movement or speech
- changes in appetite or weight (usually decreased, but sometimes increased)
- frequent unexplained aches and pains
- disturbed sleep patterns (for example, problems going to sleep and/or waking throughout the night, particularly in the early hours of the morning)
- losing interest or being disruptive at school or playing truant
- constantly complaining that they feel bored or lonely

Self-harming teenagers - People who self-harm usually try to keep it a secret from their friends and family and often injure themselves in places that can be hidden easily by clothing. If you suspect a teenager is self-harming, look out for any of the following signs:

- unexplained cuts, bruises or cigarette burns, usually on their wrists, arms, thighs and chest
- keeping themselves fully covered at all times, even in hot weather
- signs of depression, such as low mood, tearfulness, a lack of motivation or lack of interest in everything
- changes in eating habits or being secretive about eating, and any unusual weight loss or weight gain
- signs of low self-esteem, such as blaming themselves for any problems or thinking they are not good enough
- signs they have been pulling out their hair
- signs of alcohol or drug misuse

Information: NHS Choices