

Adolescents and Mental Health

PARENT GUIDE - AGES 13-19



Potential WARNING Signs

If your child is experiencing these symptoms consider seeking help.

- Lost interest in things they once enjoyed
- Low energy/sleeping too much/too little
- Isolated socially/avoids social interactions
- Fears weight gain and/or diets and exercises obsessively
- Engages in self-harm behaviors
- Increase in drug/alcohol use
- Has thoughts of suicide
- Difficulty concentrating
- Decreased academic performance
- Attempts to say goodbye
- Researching ways to harm themselves or obtain weapons
- Acting irritable, anxious or reckless

Do not wait for symptoms to appear to begin conversations about mental wellness. Inform your child of the warning signs. Encourage strategies for healthy living.

**NOTE: if a child's behavior is unsafe or if a child talks about wanting to hurt themselves and/or others
SEEK HELP IMMEDIATELY**

How to Start The Conversation

1. **Set up a time & place**—Pick a comfortable, relaxed time to talk with your child
2. **Be Direct**—Let them know you've been noticing a change in their behavior in a nonjudgemental way
3. **Listen**—Listen carefully to their response and look for any warning signs
4. **Respond Empathetically**—Emphasize that you want to support your child

Tips for Conversation

1. **Be a good listener**—let your child explain how they are feeling without passing judgement
2. **Be Honest**—talk with your child candidly and openly
3. **Be Compassionate**—let your child know that you recognize and respect their feelings
4. **Be Patient**—give your child enough time and space so they feel comfortable talking to you