

PARENT CHECKLIST

Is This Normal Teen Behavior or Something More?

A parent checklist for noticing patterns, changes, and when additional support may help.

Teen development can include moodiness, privacy, changing friendships, and a stronger need for independence. The question is not whether one behavior appears, but how intense, frequent, sudden, or disruptive the pattern has become.

1. Notice the Pattern

- ☐ The behavior is new or represents a noticeable change from your teen's usual personality.
- ☐ The concern has lasted several weeks or is becoming more frequent.
- ☐ The behavior happens across multiple settings, such as home, school, work, or friendships.
- ☐ Your teen is struggling to recover after disappointment, conflict, or stress.
- ☐ The behavior is interfering with sleep, school, relationships, responsibilities, or daily functioning.

2. Watch for Changes in Daily Life

- ☐ Significant changes in sleep, appetite, energy, hygiene, or motivation.
- ☐ Withdrawing from family, friends, activities, sports, or interests they previously enjoyed.
- ☐ A sudden decline in grades, attendance, work performance, or responsibility.
- ☐ Frequent physical complaints, panic, avoidance, or requests to stay home.
- ☐ Increased secrecy, lying, aggression, substance use, or risky behavior.

3. Pay Attention to Emotional Signals

- ☐ Persistent sadness, hopelessness, irritability, fear, or emotional numbness.
- ☐ Intense reactions that seem difficult for your teen to regulate.
- ☐ Statements suggesting they feel worthless, trapped, unwanted, or like a burden.
- ☐ Frequent self-criticism or extreme fear of failure, rejection, or embarrassment.
- ☐ Talk of self-harm, suicide, harming others, or not wanting to be alive.

How to Read Your Checklist

- A few checked boxes do not automatically mean something is seriously wrong.
- Look for clusters: several changes happening together are more meaningful than one isolated behavior.
- Sudden, intense, or worsening changes deserve attention even if they have not lasted long.
- Trust your knowledge of your teen. A meaningful change from their usual baseline matters.

A helpful next step

Choose a calm moment and describe what you have noticed without accusing or diagnosing: "I've noticed you have been sleeping more, missing school, and spending less time with friends. I'm not here to punish you. I want to understand how you have been feeling."

When to Seek Support

Consider speaking with a qualified professional when the concern is persistent, worsening, disrupting daily life, or leaving you unsure how to respond. A focused parent consultation can help you organize what you are seeing and decide what to do next.