



Teen years-What is normal:

Intellectual Development

- Abstract thinking becomes more to the “gray” areas and change their mind about the “grays” to suit their goals and wishes.
- Expand their logic and reasoning abilities, but then have trouble with planning.
- Now considers the future and have thoughtful discussions about war, college, the economy, and their visions of what would make the world better.
- They’ll punch holes in your logic, and they’ll challenge you with thought-out reason.

Emotional Development

Help your teen learn how to recognize and deal with stress, anger, and sadness; to exercise regularly and eat healthy food; and to express feelings honestly as well as respect others’ feelings in friendships and romantic relationships. Your teen will continue to benefit from continuing to do his part around home and at school, and in taking care of his own well-being.

- Emotionally, teenagers don’t typically like physical affection from their parents. Many do, however, like a lot of physical affection from their friends.
- Expect a lot of tension and conflict with your teenager, because your teenager is separating from you. The path to independence is rocky for both parents and older teenagers.
- Some older teenagers will go anywhere—except where their parents are. Be patient with this. Typically kids will draw closer to parents once they leave home. Once they’ve experienced “true independence,” they discover that their parents aren’t as idiotic as they thought when they were older teenagers.
- Some teenagers will give you the silent treatment when they become angry—or if they don’t get their way. Give them time to simmer down. They’ll talk to you again (usually when they need something from you).
- Some kids begin dabbling in more serious risk behaviors (such as self-harm, drinking alcohol, trying drugs, and having sex). Help kids steer clear of these behaviors. Talk with them about what they’re experiencing—and what they’re seeing going on with their peers. Some are struggling with difficult issues.

Physical Development

- Fifteen-year-olds can be mistaken for 21-year-olds, which is why some teenagers find themselves in troubling situations.

- Since all kids go through five stages of puberty, you'll continue to see older teenagers mature and you'll notice teenagers maturing at different rates. This is normal, even if teenagers don't feel like it is.
- Most teenagers have trouble waking up in the morning. Part of this is because they stay up later. But part of it is biological. Older teenagers tend to shortchange sleep, which can hinder their development.

Social Development

- At this age, friendships and romance become more important while cliques become less so.
- Older teenagers are less influenced by peer pressure. They're more likely to seek out experts when they want to know or do something.
- Teenagers are heavily influenced by their friends when it comes to clothing, styles, music, and fads.
- Your child is more likely to seek out advice and help from a friend than from you.
- A lot of teenagers pair off into couples. Dating becomes more pervasive, and some teens develop intense romantic relationships.

Teen Suicide and Depression:

A. Myth – Suicide in youth is not a problem

Truth –

1. Everyday 12 youth die by suicide
2. For every one death, 30 attempts are made
3. It is the 3rd leading cause of death among 10-24 year olds

B. Myth – Asking about suicide causes suicidal behavior

Truth – Addressing the topic of suicide in a caring, empathetic, and nonjudgmental way shows that you are taking your child seriously and responding to their emotional pain

C. Myth – Only a professional can identify a child at risk for suicidal behavior

Truth – Parents and other caregivers often are the first to recognize warning signs and most able to intervene in a loving way

The Warning Signs

4 out of 5 teen suicide attempts are preceded by clear warning signs, so make sure to know them. A warning sign does not mean your child will attempt suicide, but do not ignore warning signs. Respond to your child immediately, thoughtfully and with loving concern. Don't dismiss a threat as a cry for attention!

- Changes in personality: sadness, withdrawal, irritability, anxiety, exhaustion, indecision
- Changes in behavior: deterioration in social relationships and school and/or work performance, reduced involvement in positive activities
- Sleep disturbance: insomnia, oversleeping; nightmares
- Changes in eating Habits: loss of appetite, weight loss, or overeating
- Fear of losing control: erratic behavior, harming self or others

The Risk Factors

Recognize certain situations and conditions that are associated with an increased risk of suicide.

- Previous suicide attempt(s) or a Mental health disorders (depression, anxiety)
- Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, guilt, loneliness, worthlessness, low self-esteem
- Loss of interest in friends, hobbies, or activities previously enjoyed
- Bullying or being a bully at school or in social settings
- Disruptive behavior or aggressive
- High risk behaviors (drinking and driving, poor decision-making), substance use
- Recent/serious loss (death, divorce, separation, broken romantic relationship,)
- Family history of suicide
- Family violence (domestic violence, child abuse or neglect)
- Sexual orientation and identity confusion (lack of support or bullying during the coming out process)
- Access to lethal means like firearms, pills, knives or illegal drugs
- Stigma associated with seeking mental health services
- Barriers to accessing mental health services (lack of bilingual service providers, unreliable transportation, financial costs)

The Protective Factors

These factors have been shown to have protective effects against teen suicide:

- Skills in problem solving, conflict resolution, and handling problems in a nonviolent way
- Strong connections to family, friends, and community support
- Restricted from lethal means of suicide
- Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide and support self-preservation
- Easy access to services
- Support through ongoing medical and mental health care relationships

Take preventive measures

You are not powerless; you can guard teens against the possibility of suicide.

- Interact with your teen positively (give consistent feedback, compliments)
- Increase involvement in positive activities (clubs/sports/school functions)
- Appropriately monitor your teen's whereabouts and communications (texting, Facebook, Twitter) with the goal of promoting safety

- Be aware of your teen’s social environment (friends, teammates, coaches) and communicate regularly with other parents in your community.
- Communicate regularly with your teen’s teachers to ensure safety at school
- Limit your teen’s access to alcohol, prescription pills, illegal drugs, knives and guns
- Talk with your teen about your concerns; ask him/her directly about suicidal thoughts
- Explain the value of therapy and medication to manage symptoms.
- Address your concerns with other adults in your child’s life (teachers, coaches, family)
- Discuss your concerns with his/her pediatrician and seek mental health referrals

Talk to your teen about suicide

Talking to your teen about a topic like suicide can seem almost impossible. Have this important discussion with your teen by using these tips.

- Talk in a calm, non-accusatory manner
- Express loving concern
- Convey how important he/she is to you
- Focus on your concern for your teen’s well-being and health
- Make “I” statements to convey you understand the stressors he/she may be experiencing
- Encourage professional help-seeking behaviors (locate appropriate resources)
- Reassure your adolescent that seeking services can change his/her outlook

Last but not least, seek mental health services

Mental health professionals can be essential partners in teen suicide prevention.

a) Take appropriate action to protect your child and if you hear a parent making any of the following statements:

- If you feel that something is “just not right”
- If you notice warning signs
- If you recognize a child has many of the risk factors and few of the protective factors listed above

b) Contact us and we can help! We have a team in Eastlake which specializes in teens! You can reach me at 619-549-0329

Lastly, parents must participate actively in their child’s therapy.

Additional Resource: Local Suicide Hotline/Resource

San Diego Access and Crisis Line:

Phone: (888) 724-7240

Hours of Operation: 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week. The San Diego Access and Crisis Line serves as a suicide prevention/intervention hotline.

