



Mental Health Challenges in Teens

Learning the signs and symptoms, and how to help

It's a time of intense stress and pressure for teens today, coming from a variety of directions. For parents, teachers, mentors and others caring for young people, it can be very important to understand how to identify to signs of distress and help them get the assistance they need.

Mental health challenges are not uncommon. 1 in 5 teens and young adults live with a mental health condition.*

*National Alliance for Mental Illness

What anxiety, depression or suicidal thoughts might look like:

Common signs that a teen or young person might be in distress:

- Pulling away from friend groups without integrating into an alternative group
- Quitting extracurricular activities without replacing them with something else
- Change in hygiene or drastic changes in appearance
- Looking or acting more tired than usual
- Victim of assault or bullying
- Sudden lashing out at teachers or fellow students
- Isolating themselves during lunch or group activities
- An uptick in unexplained absences
- Sudden change in grades or stop completing assignments
- An elevated mood after a period of depression (can be associated with suicidal thoughts)
- Talking, reading, or writing about death or suicide (can be associated with suicidal thoughts)

(Continued on the following page.)

If you're feeling suicidal or in crisis, please call or text 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. You can also chat at **988lifeline.org**.





Fifty percent of all mental illnesses begin by age 14, and Seventy-five percent by their mid-20s.*

*Archives of General Psychiatry

How can you help a teen struggling with mental health challenges?

Listen. You don't need to feel like you have to solve their problems or give advice, but being available to listen can be one of the most important things you can do to help someone struggling.

Don't judge. Show that you're concerned in a way that is not confrontational or judgmental. Let them know that you care about them and are checking in because of concern.

Keep questions simple. Ask how they are doing, what they are feeling and how you can help.

Offer hope. Reassure them. Let them know they are not alone and you are there to support them.

Provide a safe, supportive environment. Feeling connected to supportive adults in a stable environment is critical to a young person's wellbeing and often helps reduce substance abuse, mental health issues and other risky behaviors.

Suggest resources. Have local support resources ready to share or offer to find those resources together.

Stay connected. After your initial conversation, stay engaged and check in regularly. Let them know that you are still there.

Support Resources in Idaho

If you need additional help, seek advice from your healthcare provider.

Free Youth Mental Health First Aid classes available from Optum Idaho. Email idaho.communications@optum.com for more information about upcoming classes in your local area.

If you need immediate crisis help, you can call or text the National and Idaho Suicide & Crisis Helpline at **988**, or chat at **988lifeline.org**. Someone is available to help you 24/7.



2-1-1 Idaho Careline: Dial **211** or **1-800-926-2588** or text **898211** to speak with a resource specialist for health and human services available in your community.

Optum Idaho's 24/7 Member Access and Crisis Line: **1-855-202-0973** (TDD/TTY services at **711** for the hearing impaired) or visit **optumidaho.com**.

