

# Signs and Symptoms of Mental Health Struggles

(from The National Institute on Mental Health)

It may be difficult to tell if troubling behavior in an adolescent is just part of growing up or a problem that should be discussed with a health professional. But if there are signs and symptoms that last weeks or months; and if these issues interfere with the child's daily life, not only at home but at school and with friends, you should contact your child's pediatrician, school counselor, or another mental health professional.

## **Your child or teen might need help if he or she:**

- Often feels anxious or worried
- Has very frequent tantrums or is intensely irritable much of the time
- Has frequent stomach aches or headaches with no physical explanation
- Is in constant motion, can't sit quietly for any length of time
- Has trouble sleeping, including frequent nightmares
- Loses interest in things he or she used to enjoy
- Avoids spending time with friends
- Has trouble doing well in school, or grades decline
- Fears gaining weight; exercises, diets obsessively
- Has low or no energy
- Has spells of intense, inexhaustible activity
- Harms herself/himself, such as cutting or burning her/his skin
- Engages in risky, destructive behavior
- Harms self or others
- Smokes, drinks, or uses drugs
- Has thoughts of suicide
- Thinks his or her mind is controlled or out of control or hears voices.

**Mental illness is very treatable!** If you are a teen, talk to your parents, school counselor, or health care provider.

- If you are a parent and need help starting a conversation with your child or teen about mental health, visit <http://www.mentalhealth.gov/>
- If you are unsure where to go for help, ask your pediatrician or family doctor or visit [NIMH's Help for Mental Illnesses](#) webpage.