

- Child development

Warning Signs of Unhealthy Behavior in Children

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As a child develops, he often exhibits changes in behavior. There are certain warning signs that should send up red flags to parents. When a child suddenly changes in extreme ways, it is time for parents to find the cause of the issues.

Signs that may not seem overly dangerous by themselves can turn into dangerous behaviors quickly. For instance, a teen girl who skips dinner frequently may not seem like someone participating in a dangerous behavior until her parents realize she is dangerously skinny and may have an eating disorder. Children do not come with handbooks, but there are signs parents can look for when they are worried about potentially unhealthy behaviors.

Change in Sleep Patterns

A change in sleep pattern can mean that the child starts sleeping more or much less than usual. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics' Healthychildren.org, a change in sleep pattern can be indicative of substance abuse or depression. Some change in sleep pattern as children develop into teens is normal, But parents should watch out for any dramatic changes in sleep. A teen who usually gets 10 hours of sleep a night and suddenly starts sleeping 1 hours a night should concern his parents. On the opposite end of the spectrum, a teen who typically sleeps 10 hours a night, and drops to five hours a night should also be of concern. Neither of these examples illustrates normal sleep pattern changes.

Decline in Academic Performance

A child who suddenly displays a dramatic drop in academic performance may be exemplifying troubling behavior. The American Psychiatric Association (APA) website says sudden poor academic performance can be indicative of depression, a learning disability, substance abuse or even trouble dealing with a social occurrence.

The APA recommends parents keep an open line of communication with children, so that a child will feel comfortable approaching her parents with any issues she is experiencing. Open communication with a child's teacher is also important when assessing changes in academic performance.

Isolation

Children go through ups and downs socially. Then a child begins to isolate himself, his parents should see this as a warning sign that something is wrong. According to child development experts at the Kids Health website, isolation is one indicator that a child is being bullied. It can also indicate issues like depression.

A child that is bullied is often too embarrassed to say anything immediately, and parents should keep a positive, accepting attitude when speaking with their child. A child who isolates herself may have had a fight with a friend. She may have experienced an embarrassing moment in school and is being teased by her peers. A child who is isolating herself needs help dealing with whatever the problem is, so that her isolation does not turn into something even more serious.

Uncontrolled Anger

Anger is a normal emotion for children to experience. Toddlers are known to have temper tantrums, and teens are known to lash out verbally. Then anger goes beyond what is considered a social norm, it can be a warning sign of bigger problems, according to experts at Psychology Today.

A child who threatens violence on himself or others has an anger problem. A child who threatens violence to a family pet or a particular group of people needs help. A child whose anger is not dealt with can spiral into dangerous behaviors. Psychology Today's experts advise parents who are dealing with an angry child to seek professional help immediately. A child who cannot process his anger properly needs assistance in dealing with his feelings in a productive way. www.living.thebump.com