

Transition to Middle School Project Newsletter

Family Studies Lab, University of Illinois

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HOW DO I KNOW IF MY STUDENT OR TEENAGER NEEDS HELP?

Many teachers and parents notice that their teenagers seem to feel "up" one moment and "down" the next. How can a teacher or parent know whether a teenager is experiencing normal mood swings or feeling so down that they might benefit from help? Here are some rules of thumb:

Many teenagers go through normative changes...

Many teenagers spend more time alone in their bedrooms, more time with friends, and less time with family than they did during childhood. Teenagers may also want more independence, question adults' decisions more, and be more irritable than they were during childhood. Many teachers and parents notice these moderate changes and they are not usually cause for concern.

Sometimes loneliness and friendlessness are indicators...

If a teenager doesn't have friends to talk with over the phone, sit with at lunchtime, or spend free time with, they may be feeling sad and lonely. It can be easy to overlook the needs of such teenagers because they often don't cause any problems in the classroom or at home and may be academically successful.

Teenagers who have a trusting relationship with adults and friends have more sources of support to help them when they are feeling down.

Sometimes aggressive and disruptive teenagers are also feeling down...

Aggressive and disruptive teenagers are often referred for help

because they may cause problems in the classroom and at home. Though aggressive teenagers are often referred to programs that help control their anger and teach skills for resolving conflicts constructively, they are sometimes also in need of help with more hidden difficulties, such as feelings of sadness.

Sometimes you just have to ask...

Some children who are feeling down may not express their concerns outwardly through social difficulties, anger, or disruptiveness. In this case, teachers and parents may not know how teenagers are feeling unless they ask. Teenagers who have a trusting relationship with adults and friends have more sources of support to help them when they are feeling down.

QUIZ: DO KIDS WANT TO BE CHALLENGED AT SCHOOL?

How important do you think that it is for most children to feel challenged by their school work? (answers on page 4)

- Not at all important
- A little important
- Somewhat important
- Very important

INSIDE :

- * Making the grade!
- * Is 6th grade harder than 5th?
- * The challenges of middle school
- * What do kids care about?
- * School Hassles
- And more ...

