

Normal or Not?

Understanding Your Child's Behavior

As your child grows and enters the teenage years, many changes happen very quickly and all at the same time. His body matures, brain develops and emotions swing. It can be an exciting time but it can be a very stressful and confusing time too for both him and you.

Your child's physical changes are easy to see and understand. Knowing what is happening to your child on the inside is harder. It may help to be aware of what is considered normal teenage behavior and what behavior might be concerning or even dangerous.

Normal Behaviors

- ◆ Keeping a journal, draw, listen to music or find another way to express his feelings.
- ◆ Believing that no one else has ever experienced similar feelings and emotions.
- ◆ Not wanting to talk about where he is going or who he is hanging around.
- ◆ Spending more time with friends.
- ◆ Being insecure about his looks.
- ◆ Arguing more.
- ◆ Asking about sex.



Normal Behaviors (May Be Concerning)

- ◆ Mood swings (unless they are intense and rapid)
- ◆ Childlike behavior (unless it becomes common)
- ◆ Sleeping a lot (unless it is for more than half the day without being sick) or a change in sleeping pattern
- ◆ Disagreeing with you (unless he will not speak or have anything to do with you)
- ◆ Spending time alone (unless he withdraws from most other people)
- ◆ Being full of energy (until it is constant hyperactivity)

Normal or Not?

Dangerous Behaviors

- ◆ Violence
- ◆ Threats of violence to you and others
- ◆ Out-of-control temper
- ◆ Sexual acting out
- ◆ Drug or alcohol use
- ◆ Suicide threats
- ◆ Self-destructive behavior
- ◆ Abnormal eating
- ◆ Major change in behavior



Responding to Teenager Behavior

Your responses to your child make a difference. You can help him choose better ways to behave by staying calm and respectful. Try the following:

- ◆ Use a regular tone of voice. Don't shout or argue.
- ◆ Don't take his behavior personally.
- ◆ Don't criticize or compare him to others, especially a brother or sister.
- ◆ Don't be sarcastic or put him down.
- ◆ Understand his need to be left alone.
- ◆ Ignore his mean comments or insults.



By Lakeland 1 Prodigy Artist Ritchie

Need Help?

Talking to other parents or a DJJ staff member may help you decide when your child may need help. If you are concerned about your child's behavior, contact DJJ's Prevention Helpline.

1-866-757-0634

Please NOTE: The Prevention Helpline is NOT a counseling service number. It is used to connect you to appropriate resources. All calls go to a voice mail system that is monitored daily.

The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice

Rick Scott, Governor

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