

## DOES YOUR CHILD SEEM DIFFERENT?

Because of the immense changes in preteen and teen behavior, it is sometimes difficult to determine when behavior may indicate a bigger problem. Adolescents experiencing emotional and mental health distress may exhibit various signs. These signs can indicate that your child may benefit from support or professional help.

Here are three common indicators:

### 1. Changes in Behavior:

- Sudden withdrawal from social activities or friends
- Significant changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Increased irritability, aggression, or frequent mood swings

### 2. Academic Decline:

- Noticeable drop in academic performance
- Lack of interest or motivation in schoolwork and extracurricular activities
- Increased absenteeism or tardiness

### 3. Physical Symptoms:

- Unexplained physical ailments such as headaches or stomachaches
- Fatigue or low energy
- Neglect of personal hygiene or appearance

## GETTING HELP

It is essential for parents and caregivers to consult with their physician to ensure their child is physically healthy and well. In addition, there are experts available to assist you with their psychological, social and emotional needs.

At your child's school, there are highly trained professionals specializing in physical and mental health. These experts include school counselors, nurses, psychologists, and social workers. These school-based specialists are ready to support you and your child, providing the help you need.

### Your child's school counselor is:

School Counselor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School Counselor Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

### Other trusted professionals on your school campus that can help (teacher, administrator):

Trusted Adult Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Trusted Adult Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

## LIFELINE SUPPORT - 988

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. To reach the Lifeline, call 988 or chat at <http://988lifeline.org>. A trained counselor from a local call center will answer the phone.

This brochure is designed by the California Association of School Counselors (CASC) to improve the safety and wellbeing of children and youth. This project is supported by the Bay Area Urban Areas Security Initiative.

To learn more about the work of CASC go to: [www.schoolcounselors-ca.org](http://www.schoolcounselors-ca.org). For additional resources on children and youth mental health go to: <https://ca4studentmentalhealth.org/>



## A CAREGIVER'S GUIDE TO YOUTH WELLBEING AND ONLINE VIOLENCE PREVENTION

The life of teens and preteens can be described as a time of change and discovery. During adolescence, young people often distance themselves from childhood attachments to form an independent identity. Sometimes they try and abandon various activities, interests, peer groups, and mindsets until they find what fits. This challenging process requires courage as they experience hormonal changes and self-esteem issues and navigate the world as they move into adulthood.

This guide was designed to help parents and other caregivers understand and obtain the necessary support for their teen when behaviors arise that might suggest deeper issues. Your support is essential for helping your child navigate this phase successfully. There are resources and people available on your school campus and within the community to assist you.





## SO VERY IMPORTANT - LISTENING

Establishing good communication with your child is crucial. Encourage your child to share their thoughts, feelings, and concerns. When your teenager does talk to you about their life, it's important to listen without judgment. It is usually best to resist the urge to interrupt, mock, criticize, or offer advice. If you simply listen and show interest in what they are saying, your teenager is more likely to continue approaching you when they need to talk.

## IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT ONLINE INFLUENCES

In today's digital age, the internet is an integral part of our children's lives, offering countless opportunities for learning, creativity, and social connection. However, it also presents certain challenges and potential negative influences that can impact their wellbeing. It's essential to be aware of these realities to better support and guide our children as they navigate the online world.

One significant concern is the exposure to inappropriate content, including violence, explicit material, violent ideology and hate speech, which can negatively affect their mental and emotional health.

## ONLINE RADICALIZATION TO VIOLENCE

Youthful rebellion can be harmless; however, when adolescents engage with hateful and extremist content, it can cause significant harm. Nowadays,

many teens are viewing and sharing provocative content online. Many former extremists say their radicalization started by receiving and sharing shocking material as a joke, to defy authority, or to impress peers. When young people start thinking about hurting others, they often exhibit changes in behavior before becoming violent. Families should be alert to any noticeable changes in their child's feelings, thoughts, or actions as these can be early warning signs of violent tendencies.

If you think your child is exposed to online violence and extremist views you can:

- Talk to your child about their online friendships.
- Ask them about the chats and other connections they have made on the web.
- Ask your child to show you how they spend their time online, perhaps by asking for pointers on how to use the internet and different apps (even if you already know how). The more involved you are in their online life, the better you will understand whether or not your child is being influenced.

