

# CHECKLIST FOR HEALTH

## A Questionnaire for Parents of Adolescents

A child's behavior can give parents valuable information about his or her emotional health and ability to cope with everyday stresses. All children experience periods of upset from time to time. Behaviors such as those listed below may simply be signs of normal growth and transition, or they may be early symptoms of problems that can benefit from professional help.

### **Eating / Sleeping:**

- Poor physical health
- Poor personal hygiene
- Poor appetite or overeating
- Difficulty getting or staying asleep
- Nightmares
- Hyperactivity
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Fatigue or lack of energy, sluggishness

### **Identity/Social Interactions:**

- Lack of interest in play or hobbies
- Lack of interest in surroundings
- Difficulty switching activities
- Difficulty concentrating/making decisions
- Excessive screen time (TV, video, electronics)
- Trouble joining group activities
- Withdrawal/isolation
- Avoids direct eye contact
- Extremely bossy or passive with peers
- Inappropriate expression of anger
- Feels disliked by teacher and/or peers
- School behavior needs improvement
- Academic performance needs improvement
- Concerns about sexuality
- Concerns about gender identity
- Indication of drug/alcohol use

### **Emotions/Attention:**

- Unhappiness
- Sadness or hopelessness
- Short attention span
- Fearfulness in general
- Difficulty self-soothing
- Hard time calming self
- Over-sensitivity
- Frequent stomach/headaches

### **Emotions/Attention (continued)**

- "Falls apart" easily/frequently
- Overly aggressive
- Frequent and intense tantrums
- Depression
- Anxiety/worry
- Panic
- Recklessness, frequent injuries
- Nail biting
- Grinding teeth

### **Communication and Self Expression:**

- Poor communication skills
- Difficulty reading others' emotions
- Difficulty in expressing needs verbally and/or nonverbally
- Difficulty having and expressing feelings
- Difficulty understanding directions
- Low self-esteem
- Negative self-talk ("I can't do it")
- Impatience with oneself
- Extreme sensitivity to criticism
- Overly competitive
- Disrespectful
- Jealousy
- Lying
- Destructiveness
- Preoccupation with death or suicide

### **Situational Factors:**

- A recent or unresolved loss: death, divorce
- Major illness/hospitalization
- Major move
- Problematic family/sibling relations
- Problematic childcare situation
- Witnessed violence or abuse

If these or other behaviors cause you concern, please don't hesitate to consult with a professional.

**Remember that early attention can often prevent problems from becoming worse.** Feel free to ask your child's pediatrician, teacher, school psychologist or mental health professional about these or any general parenting questions. Often an initial consultation is all that is needed.

## Tips for Families

Your relationship with your child is the most important thing in their world.  
Let your child know what a delight he/she is to you.  
Show and express your love for your child.  
Value your child's uniqueness and authentic self.  
Be grateful and show gratitude.

Make sure your child begins the day with a nutritious breakfast.  
See that your child gets adequate sleep every night.

Keep your home a healthy environment (avoid alcohol and drug abuse in the home).  
Limit the use of electronics and TV.

Spend time outside.  
Spend time reading and let them listen to books.  
Have the whole family cook, clean and do chores together.  
Spend unstructured time together.  
Play games, do puzzles, build things, create art.  
Explore the world together.  
Create special play times where your child takes the lead; follow him/her.

Listen deeply.  
Keep communication open with regular family meetings.  
Freely praise specific behaviors that you would like to see continue:  
"I appreciate the way you put your toys away right away when it was time."

Respect individuality; avoid comparing your child to others.  
Speak directly to your child; avoid speaking in front of your child about him/her.

Encourage expressing a full range of emotions; label feelings for your child,  
even if you're not exactly sure.  
After a fight or outburst help your child re-establish contact with you:  
"I'm sorry I got so upset." "You really were so angry we couldn't talk."  
Help kids repair mistakes.  
Learn to include others.

Decide on reasonable, clear rules and enforce them consistently. Don't nag, yell, threaten, or bribe.  
Expect your child to not always do as you want them to.

When changes are anticipated, let your child know what will change and what will stay the same.  
If a child is temporarily insecure (a change, an illness), give a few more hugs or an extra story.

*This checklist, prepared by the Community Institute for Psychotherapy, is provided to you as a community service to strengthen families in our community.*

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