How do I know if my child is struggling and needs help?

You might understandably wonder if your son or daughter is truly acting like a typical teenager, or if they might be having more serious struggles that will require some professional help.

To help you answer any potential concerns, please read through the following questions that can help you assess how your child is behaving.

1 Does your teen have frequent feelings of being sad, including crying for no concrete reason?

Everyone feels sad sometimes. But if your teen often tells you they are sad and/or you have seen them tearing up or crying for no clear reason, it may be a sign of depression.

2 Does your teen always seem to be irritated or act annoyed with everyone and everything?

Hormonal changes and other issues can cause your teen to be grumpier than usual. However, if your once relatively happy teen is suddenly and consistently irritable or seems unable to shake this mood, it may be cause for concern.

3 Is your teen suddenly sleeping all the time... or hardly at all?

Teens are notorious for having their own sleep schedules and many would prefer to stay up late into the night and sleep in. But watch for changes in your teen's sleeping behavior including insomnia or sleeping away much of the day, as well as complaining of feeling tired and not having energy to do anything.

4 Are your teen's grades suddenly dropping?

Classes in middle school and high school are often more challenging, with more homework requirements than earlier grades. So, although some teens will struggle with school and their grades may not be as good as before, sudden drops in their academic performance including numerous failing grades could be a red flag that something is amiss.

5 Is your teen having angry outbursts?

Anger is a normal emotion for people of all ages. With teens, however, it is important to watch for an increase in those angry outbursts that seem to be "over the top" as a reaction, disruptive and/or result in your teen lashing out physically or taking it out on themselves.

6 Are there any non-verbal indicators?

Some teens are really good at expressing their emotions and will tell you when they are feeling angry, sad and/or annoyed. Others will use non-verbal indicators to share their thoughts and feelings; in other words, they will use actions rather than words. Common examples that are signs for concern include:

- New lack of interest in hygiene or appearance
- Giving away their possessions,
- Being socially withdrawn
- Alcohol or drug use
- Rapid changes in weight
- Being easily distracted

7 Is your teen self-harming?

In an effort to feel less depressed or anxious, or distract themselves from their challenges in life, some teens will deliberately harm themselves. While cutting is probably the most common form of self-harm, teenagers may also bang their heads, burn their skin, strangle themselves or take too much medication on purpose. If your child is always wearing long-sleeved shirts, even in the middle of summer, if you notice new or old cuts on their legs, wrists or arms and/or if they seem anxious, depressed and have issues controlling emotions please take note, as these are all red flags of possible self-harm.

8 Is your teen talking about death or suicide?

It can certainly be normal for teens to want to talk about death, especially if they have lost a loved one to old age, illness, or suicide. Tragic news stories may also cause your teen to ask you questions about death and dying. Talking about their own death, commenting that they wish they were dead, making a suicide plan or excessively focusing on dying are much more serious and indicate that professional help is needed.

I don't recognize any concerning signs in my teen.

Your teen's thoughts and feelings do not seem to be interfering with their daily life.

I'm concerned about my teen's behavior.

Please contact Georgetown Behavioral Health for more support and information at (512) 819-1154

My teen needs immediate help.

If you are concerned that your child could be at risk to themselves or others, please call 911.

GEORGETOWN Behavioral Health Institute

GET HELP NOW: (512) 819-1154 or learn more at **GeorgetownBehavioral.com**

This list is not designed to be a fully diagnostic tool, it is meant to be a starting point for parents and guardians who are concerned for their child and looking for resources, information, and support.