



Mainline Health Presents: Children and Mental Health

Parents usually know when something is off with their children, so you should trust your gut. Some common red flags indicating your child may be struggling can be found below.

Younger Children

- ▶ Regression
 - Example: a potty-trained child suddenly needing diapers again
- ▶ No desire to eat

Talk to your pediatrician if you are concerned.

Older Children

- ▶ Not getting dressed in the morning
- ▶ Not brushing their teeth
- ▶ Not reaching out to friends and/or family
- ▶ No more interest in doing what previously brought them joy

If you notice changes and your child begins to struggle in school, start by contacting the school guidance counselor and a mental health therapist. Guidance counselors are overwhelmed, so be kind but persistent. On [Psychology Today](#), you can search for a variety of therapists in your area and see whether or not they are in network. You can also talk your concerns over with your child's pediatrician.

How to Talk to Your Children About Your Concerns

- ▶ As a parent, it's important for you to keep your feelings to yourself to avoid your child feeling as if you are mad at them
- ▶ Check in with yourself:
 - Are you ready for what the outcome may be?
 - Are you able to control your feelings?

How COVID-19 Has Affected Children

- ▶ Feelings of being out of control
- ▶ Fear
- ▶ Loss of coping skills

How to Build Resourceful, Emotionally Intelligent Children:

- ▶ Help children recognize and name feelings
- ▶ Assist with developing coping skills
- ▶ Let them figure things out on their own as appropriate; parents can't do everything for children because they won't learn that way

Signs Your Child Is in Crisis Mode

- ▶ They say phrases such as "I wish I could sleep forever," "I don't want to be here," "I can't take it anymore," etc.
- ▶ Isolation
- ▶ Not showering
- ▶ Suicide ideation rating scale:
 - 1: fleeting, comes in and out
 - 2: thoughts
 - 3: urge to follow through
 - 4: has a plan with some intention
 - 5: has an urge and will follow through — this is a crisis

To help an older child refusing treatment, remind your child that the entire focus is on enabling them to feel better. Additionally, you can give them an ultimatum and then stick to it. Important: You should also seek support for yourself as a parent.

Effective Social Media Limitations

- ▶ Take cell phones away at night time
- ▶ Pay attention to what they are watching
- ▶ Don't allow the phone to be a coping mechanism
- ▶ Use functions within the phone to limit time on apps

Questions and Answers

During the pandemic, some children have regressed back to sleeping in bed with their parents. Is this behavior ok to continue?

This is not a severe problem. In this climate, we can adapt. Parents can wait for their child to fall asleep and then carry them back into their own room.

How can parents working from home full time with children learning virtually avoid passing stress and anxiety off on them?

Do not feel guilty. It is more important that you spend quality time with your children outside of work and school.

How do you set rules for children who are struggling with mental health?

Boundaries and rules are important. Don't let your child manipulate you.

Be creative, remember that you are modeling behavior, find your own coping skills, and your children will see that.