

Signs of Trauma

Adolescents (Age 13 - 17)



Trauma can have significant impact on an adolescent's life, but sometimes it can be hard to spot the signs.

Trauma may affect an adolescent's...

In the following ways...



Body

- Eating problems
- Sleeplessness or sleeping much more
- Nightmares
- Dissociation (i.e., "spacing out")
- Drastic and/or sudden changes to appearance (e.g., hair color, haircut, piercing, tattoos, clothing attire)



Brain (thinking)

- Hyperactivity
- Distractibility
- Inattention
- Helplessness
- Poor self-esteem or negative self-talk
- Overly self-reliant
- Distrust of others
- Changes in how they think about the world
- Loss of former belief systems



Emotions (feelings)

- Shame
- Embarrassment
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Feeling of alienation or loneliness
- Flashbacks
- Panic attacks



Behaviors

- Food hoarding
- Drug or alcohol use
- Suicidal thoughts and actions
- Self-injury (e.g., cutting, hair pulling, burning)
- Running away
- Unsafe sexual behaviors
- Overly controlling
- Aggression
- Loss of interest in, withdrawing, or struggling to stay with an activity
- Increased absenteeism from school or work
- Fearful of home life (e.g., arriving to school early or leave late)
- Dropping out of school
- Getting in trouble with the law



Relationships & attachments

- Trouble relating to peers
- Negatively influenced by peers or adults
- Unhealthy romantic relationships
- Difficulty maintaining relationships
- Problematic sexual behaviors

Note: While this guide is meant to help you think about potential signs of trauma, it is not meant to be a diagnostic tool or checklist. Remember, these lists are not exhaustive. Individual children may exhibit a combination of signs from different age groups and signs of trauma may vary based on the developmental stage and cultural background of the child.