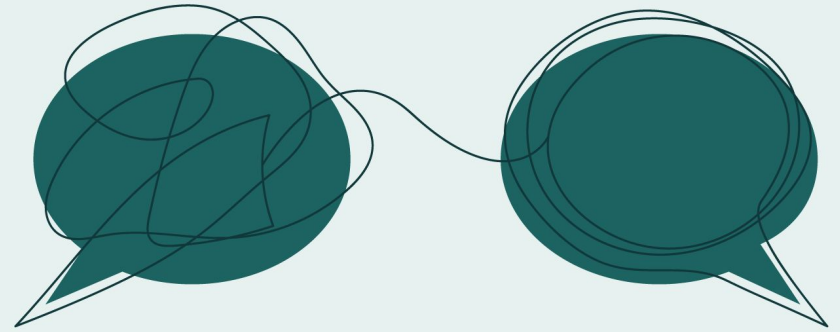


Table Talk



When should my child seek therapy?

Just like adults, children experience a wide range of emotions. It's normal for them to feel happy and excited one minute, and angry, sad, worried, or fearful the next.

As a parent, it can be hard to spot the difference between a typical emotional reaction and something that needs more attention. It can be especially hard with adolescents, as mood shifts are a normal part of their development.



Here are some questions to ask yourself to know if your child can benefit from therapy:

- **Has there been a change in routines and daily habits?** Is your child eating more or less? Are they having trouble sleeping (or sleeping too much)? Have they gained or lost weight? Has their personal hygiene suffered?
- **Are you seeing problems socializing?** Have you seen decreased socialization, increased withdrawal, a change in friends, or a loss of interest in preferred activities?
- **Are there ongoing difficulties at school?** Is there disinterest in attending school, discipline issues, a decrease in grades, or excessive concern with good grades?
- **Is there substance use?** While sometimes hard to detect, is there experimentation or misuse of substances and/or alcohol?
- **Has screen time increased?** Is it hard for your child to stop playing games, engaging in social media, or visiting inappropriate sites?
- **Has there been a recent loss?** Has your child experienced a loss recently, such as a breakup, death, divorce, or separation?
- **Is there increased conflict in the house?** Is your child suddenly engaging in more conflict (talking back, fighting) with you, siblings, or another parent or guardian?

Therapy can help

Therapy helps kids of all ages get comfortable with emotions, improve their mood, change negative or distorted thinking patterns, reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, and build self-esteem and self-advocacy skills.

Talking with your kids

Here are some ways to start the conversation:

- Schedule a child/teen-led family meeting about feelings and let your child set the agenda.
- Talk about difficult emotions while playing a game or doing a puzzle.
- Bring up your concerns while in the car.
- Enlist the help of other trusted adults (grandparents, aunts/uncles, close friends).
- Remember that one is not done. Allow space for the conversations to continue.

A Special Needs Perspective:

Children with special needs may need coordination of support. As a parent, you can:

- **Ask to revisit your child's Individualized Education Plans (IEP).** *You can call a meeting at any time to review, regroup, discuss progress and difficulties, and realign strategies for success.*
- **Include outside providers in school meetings.** Additional professionals (therapists, coaches, specialists) can help brainstorm successful strategies in collaboration with the school team to boost skill building and mental health management and generalize skills across all settings.



Get support

If you, your family, or your children are experiencing any of the challenges described here, or just want extra support working through a tough time, we're here to help. Sign in and learn about your Spring Health benefit at benefits@springhealth.