

# Mind Games: Unlocking Facts of Teen Mental Well-Being

## Give Teens' Mental Well-Being a Boost with These Facts About Teen Stress and Anxiety.

Did you know that many teens report struggles with their mental health at some point? Over half of Colorado high school students feel that their daily stress levels aren't manageable.

However, **talking about mental health challenges such as stress and anxiety with your teen(s) can help them understand the problem, feel safe coming to you, and help them manage better.**

We're here to help you learn!

### What is Mental Health, Stress, and Anxiety?

Just like we care for our teen's bodies, it's also important to look out for their thoughts and emotions. Anxiety is feeling worried or scared about things, even if they might not happen. Stress is feeling mental pressure or tension. Sometimes teens feel these emotions a lot – it's a normal part of being a teen – and you're an important part of helping them learn how to manage these emotions.

### What Does Anxiety Look Like?

Anxiety can also be different in each person, but keep an eye on your teen when they:

- Think about things too much/worrying a lot
- Act jittery or nervous
- Get stomach aches or headaches
- Have trouble focusing
- Avoid certain places or activities

### What Does Stress Look Like?

Stress can look different in everyone, but keep an eye out for these signs:

- **Changes in Sleep:** If your teen has a hard time falling asleep or wakes up a lot during the night, it could be a sign of stress. Even if they're getting enough sleep, they may still feel tired if they're struggling.
- **Changes in Eating:** Stress might make your teen not feel like eating much, or they could eat more than usual. Keep an eye on their eating habits.
- **Changes in Mood:** If your teen gets upset or angry more often, it might be because they are stressed. They might need extra support.
- **Changes in Interests:** If your teen suddenly stops liking things they used to enjoy, it could be a sign of stress. Pay attention to any changes in their interests and talk to them about it.

### When It's More than Stress and Anxiety

**If you're concerned that your child may be facing more than typical stress and anxiety, it's time to act. Talk to your child's healthcare provider.**

**They can help you find and access additional mental health resources to support your child.**

## Effects of Negative Mental Health

Youth brains are still growing and developing, which means mental health challenges can affect them and the way they grow into adulthood. Some of those ways are:

- **Social Isolation:** Mental health challenges might make teens stop enjoying things they used to enjoy, like playing with friends or hobbies.
- **Problems at School:** Anxiety and stress can sometimes make it difficult for teens to focus in school, and they might have trouble with their grades.
- **Physical Complaints:** Mental health issues can also show up as physical problems, like stomach aches or headaches.
- **Changes in Eating Habits:** Stress or anxiety might make teens not want to eat much or eat more than usual. These changes in appetite can be a sign that something is going on with their mental health.



## CONNECT MORE Key Tip

Talk with your teenager to understand what's going on and address any worries you might have.

## Tips to Support Your Teen's Mental Health

- Regularly check-in: Let them know that you are always there for them.
- Give extra care during difficult situations: Extra support during high-stress moments like grief, divorce, changing schools, or bullying can mean a lot.
- Ask non-judgmental questions: Share neutral observations if you've noticed changes in mood, school performance, or friendships.
- Ask how you can support them: Listen to their ideas and follow through with their needs.
- Recognize the signs that your teen may be struggling with their mental health, such as:
  - Persistent sadness, irritation, or isolation
  - Self-harm, or suicidal behavior
  - Violence or fighting
  - Not eating, or throwing up
  - Intense worrying or fear
  - Substance or alcohol misuse
  - Severe mood swings or changes in behavior/personality
  - Changes in school performance.
- Seek support from others:
  - **I Matter:** Free virtual, confidential, professional counseling sessions for youth 11 and up.
  - Call 911 or contact **Colorado Crisis Services** (Call 1-844-493-8255 or text "TALK" to 38255) if your teen is in crisis or is in danger of harming themselves or others.
  - **Forward Together** has great resources to help you get comfortable and get them talking:
  - [Here's What To Ask Kids To Get Them Talking](#)
  - [How I Connect With My Kids By Meeting Them in "Their World"](#)