



When Should I Seek Help For My Child?

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Although they do not usually admit it, and sometimes seem like they are actively doing the opposite, children and teens look to adults to guide them and help them understand and make sense of the world around them. At this moment in our history, there are so many things going on in the global, national, and local community. We are trying to navigate a pandemic, a very contentious political climate, social and racial justice issues, and the fact that it seems like everything is controversial.

Our children are absorbing the same stressors, without the benefit of adult sense-making skills, and are having difficulty functioning at their typical level.

When should you start to worry your child's difficulties are not manageable on their own? Since seeking a therapist's assistance can be intimidating, we offer the following guidelines to help you and your family determine if the time is right to seek counseling.

- **Significant distress, and persistent irritability or sadness:** It is totally expected that a young person will become sad or angry following a triggering event. If this irritability, sadness, or other emotionality persists for more than a week or so after the event and does not seem to be subsiding, it may be time to reach out for help.

- **Loss of interest in enjoyable activities, and a hard time looking forward to things:** As youth become pre-occupied with their negative thoughts or worries, they often find that the things that they typically look forward to do not draw the same excitement or enjoyment. At times, they may even avoid things that they previously enjoyed.

- **Disrupted sleep:** This is a tough one, especially now. Teens sleep patterns are disrupted because of altered school schedules. Some of this is due to kids staying up too late – that is to be expected. However, if your child is having a hard time either falling asleep or staying asleep and they want to be sleeping, this may be a sign that their worries are interfering.



WHAT DO WE DO?

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- **Regression in behavior:** Parents might notice some “younger” behaviors emerging in their children. Elementary aged children may have an increase in tantrums that remind parents of the pre-school years. Older children and even teenagers may become “clingy” with their parents.
- **Decrease in performance in school:** Even in the midst of a pretty non-traditional school year, many students are doing well and have adjusted. Youth are resilient, after all. However, if your child begins to show a marked decline in their academic performance, this is a good sign that they may be having a tough time managing their emotions or worries.
- **Self-harm:** Any time that a young person hurts themselves, it is cause for alarm. This is a complicated topic, best walked through with the assistance of a caring mental health professional. Don't panic, but please reach out for assistance as soon as possible.
- **Talking about, or thinking about death:** One of the diagnostic criteria for depression is when a person has near constant thoughts of death. During a pandemic, many of us are likely thinking more about death than we would typically. With that being said, it is important to pay attention to an increased pre-occupation with death. In the event that your young person has expressed a desire to end their life, please seek immediate emergency assistance by calling 211 or 911.
- **Any combination of the following:** obsessive behavior, negative self-comparison, psychosomatic complaints, conflict within relationships and/or loss of friendships, drastic changes in routine or daily activities, use of drugs, alcohol or other unhealthy coping skills.

Please keep in mind that childhood and adolescence are challenging even in the best of circumstances. Some of the above signs might be manageable on their own. And certainly sometimes these difficulties emerge and resolve naturally. However, especially during these uncertain times, it is never a bad idea to ask for help. Our caring staff are available here and ready to help your family navigate the issues you may be facing. Please call 860.313.1119 or visit <https://bit.ly/seetherapist> to make an appointment.

Welcome to Bridge Elmwood



We recently opened a new Counseling Center at 100 Shield Street in the Elmwood section of West Hartford. A significant increase in both counseling appointments and clients served during the past year prompted the move from the former space on Farmington Avenue.

The counseling programs offered in the clinic provide crisis counseling, stabilization, and individual, couple, and family therapy. The services are available to every individual and family regardless of their ability to pay.

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