



HOW TO SPOT DANGEROUS TEEN BEHAVIOR DURING SUMMER VACATION

Summertime boredom can lead to risky teen behavior. To prevent teenagers from making unsafe and unhealthy choices, parents need to stay engaged, maintain open communication, and watch for warning signs.

SIGNS OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, June and July are the peak months for teen drinking and drug use. Watch for:

- Bloodshot eyes, runny nose, chronic coughing
- Sudden, unexplained weight loss
- Poor hygiene and grooming
- Secretive behavior, hiding in their room
- Extreme moodiness

SIGNS THAT A TEEN MIGHT BE STRUGGLING

Isolating Themselves

- Sleeping very late in the morning
- Staying plugged in for hours at a time
- Not engaging with peers
- Lack of enthusiasm for activities they used to enjoy
- Neglecting self-care, such as showers, exercise, etc.

Spending All Their Time with a New Friend Group

Obsession with a new peer group can be a warning sign, particularly if a teen rejects their former friends. While it's not uncommon for teenagers' peer relationships to shift over time, it's important for parents to get to know these new friends. Are they supporting your teen, or exerting unhealthy peer pressure?

Altering Their Appearance

With more time on their hands, teenagers often experiment with their look, often as a way to fit in with a new peer group. They might cut or dye their hair, get body piercings, or try a new way of dressing. This doesn't have to be a bad thing, but extreme change within a short amount of time can be a warning sign.

SIGNS OF DEPRESSION

Loneliness, boredom, and lack of structure can contribute to depression. Watch for:

- Fatigue and difficult concentrating
- Expressing sadness and hopelessness
- Unexplained headaches or stomach problems
- Irritability and frustration
- Disturbed sleep patterns

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO TO HELP

BE AWARE OF WHAT YOUR TEEN IS DOING

Parents need to know what their kids are up to, and they may have to impose limits on the amount of time teens spend outside the home. Check in with your teen every day about where they will be and what their plans are.

PLAN FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Many families take a vacation during the summer, but don't wait for that one week to spend time together. Take day trips, do creative projects as a family, or spend an afternoon at the local waterpark, ropes course, or museum.

SET LIMITS WHEN NECESSARY

Establishing limits for an adolescent during the summer is often necessary. Areas in which setting boundaries can be very important for teens include technology use, curfews, chores, driving (especially at night), and having friends over.

COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR TEEN

A meaningful, trusting connection between kids and parents is one of the most powerful factors in supporting teens' mental and physical health. Keep communication going with open-ended conversations and regular check-ins.

MAKE SURE THEY GET THE HELP THEY NEED

If a teen exhibits signs of depression, isolation, or substance abuse, a mental health assessment is warranted. Outpatient or residential treatment can provide the clinical care, structure, and community that teens need to thrive.



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