

## Should I Be Concerned?

From time to time, your child may have behaviors and feelings that worry you. Many times these behaviors are a normal part of growing up. For example, adjusting to a new daycare may cause your child to be more irritable or anxious. Adjustment periods for such changes are normal. But sometimes disruptions can lead to more significant problems. Here are some signs to look for if you think your child may be showing signs of a mental health disorder.

### *Mood*

- Appears sad or depressed
- Lethargic or apathetic
- Cries a lot and is irritable or anxious

### *Emotional Development*

- Increased separation anxiety
- Excessive stranger anxiety
- Repeated nightmares; night terrors
- Unusual fear of the dark, fear of toileting alone, and other new fears
- Doesn't seek comfort or resists comforting
- Preoccupied with or compulsively reenacts a traumatic event in play
- Lacks social shyness around unfamiliar adults (for example willing to leave with a stranger or hugs strangers)
- Cooperating, showing affection, and relying on others is missing or very restricted

### *Social Developmental*

- Is able to repeat a rule, but isn't able to follow it
- Has difficulty with instructions that have more than two steps
- Motor skills lag behind children of the same age
- Temporary loss of previously acquired skills, such as talking or toileting
- May rarely speak or may be unable to initiate or maintain a conversation
- Unable to comprehend danger

### *Physical Health*

- Change in sleep patterns; disrupted sleep
- Disinterested in food; weight loss
- Tremors

### *Physical Behaviors*

- Increased irritability, outbursts of anger, or extreme fussiness
- Aggression toward peers, adults, or animals
- Frequent tantrums; noncompliance
- Reckless and defiant behavior
- Lack of impulse control
- Distractible, unable to concentrate, poor memory
- Difficulty with transitions between activities and/or changes in routine
- Repetitive physical movements such as eye blinking, throat clearing, or coughing

### *Social Behaviors*

- Hitting or biting that is uncharacteristic
- Lack of interest or pleasure in favorite daily activities and routines such as playing and story time
- Difficulty waiting their turn
- Seemingly unable to listen
- Does not initiate social interaction
- Avoids eye contact
- Difficulty with non-verbal communication
- Increased social withdrawal

### *Sensitivities*

- Lack of sensitivity or highly sensitive to sounds, lights, smells, touch, clothes, shoes, and/or the taste and texture of foods
- Tasks such as brushing teeth and combing and/or cutting hair may be nearly impossible to accomplish
- Easily over-stimulated, then hard to soothe
- Limited diet and strong resistance to foods because of the texture

## You Know Your Child

Remember, most children will display some of these signs as a normal part of childhood. If your child's feelings and behaviors seem to last too long, occur often over time, or are disruptive, talk with your child's doctor.

