

At a Glance: Signs of Stress in Your Middle-Schooler

Kids with learning and attention issues may not realize that they are stressed. Here are some red flags to watch for in your middle-schooler.

Red flag:

Your daughter's been complaining of "bad pains" in her head and neck. You take her to the doctor and have her eyes checked, but nothing seems to be wrong.

The issue:

When the mind is overwhelmed, it can affect the body. Complaints include body pain, tiredness, headaches and stomachaches.

Red flag:

She's stopped wanting to go to her Wednesday afternoon dance class. In fact, she doesn't want to do much after school these days other than come home and stay home.

The issue:

After a day at school, an overwhelmed tween may retreat to a place where she can avoid more challenges.

Red flag:

You ask what homework your son has and he says "none." You find out two days later he had a big math test and failed it.

The issue:

A tween can become so overwhelmed that he can "check out." He may lie to avoid facing the challenge.

Red flag:

A teacher calls to say your daughter has been unusually difficult. She's fiddling with her phone, rummaging through her purse—everything but focusing.

The issue:

Stress can play out as fidgeting behavior. At home, you may notice she's having difficulty sleeping.

Red flag:

You ask your son if he's started working on his English project. He flies back at you, "Why can't you just leave me alone? I feel like a prisoner here!"

The issue:

Anger, aggression and emotional reactions are classic signs a child who is overwhelmed. It might seem that just about anything triggers him to go off, but it's a sign that there's more going on.

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for learning & attention issues

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