

## Recognizing Trouble Signs in Teens

Any young person, whatever his/her income, background, education or culture, can find themselves in trouble. Mentors cannot solve these problems, but can make a difference. Your most important roles are listening, understanding and being aware.

Some signs that an adolescent may need help. Warning signs of drug abuse, suicide, physical abuse, or other problems.

**Remember:** Contact your program coordinator immediately if you suspect that your mentee is struggling with any of these issues.

### Drug or Alcohol Abuse

- Irrational behavior or "spaced out" behavior
- A sudden increase in accidents
- Lying
- Loss of interest in school
- Secretiveness
- Spending a lot of time alone
- Severe mood swings
- Sleeping a lot
- Alcohol on breath

### Physical or Sexual Abuse, Including Incest or Neglect

- Non-accidental physical injury
- Frequent accidents
- Abrupt changes in personality
- Emotional withdrawal
- Physical defensiveness
- Running away
- Sudden onset of compulsive and/or self-destructive behavior
- Reluctance to be with a particular family member

### Suicide

- Giving away possessions
- Making a will
- Talking about death or dying

[Courtesy of the Mentoring Partnership of New York]

- Prolonged depression
- Saying her family would be better off without her
- Being suddenly at peace (may indicate a decision to end the pain by ending life)
- Evidence of a plan or method

**Other General Warning Signs**

- Major weight loss
- Poor self-image
- Problems at school
- Serious depression
- Law-breaking behavior