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EAP News #88

### Is This A Phase Or Is My Child Really Troubled?

All Children have behavioral and emotional problems at times. The following is not intended as an exhaustive list of childhood problems or a substitute for a professional evaluation. It is a description of typical behaviors and general guidelines about when to seek help.

#### 1. OPPOSITIONAL BEHAVIOR

Its normal for children of different ages to rebel at times against rules or directions from parents and teachers, but if the child seems to fight constantly, has a strong need to be in control, often requires things his way or has problems in school and with peers, a consultation is in order.

#### 2. AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

It's healthy for everyone to express anger from time to time but continued and constant aggression in a child, the inability to take normal frustrations in stride, and physical acts of aggression when verbal expressions would be developmentally more appropriate are indications that something is amiss. If the child's mood is frequently angry and irritable with violent and destructive play, a consultation is indicated.

#### 3. DEPRESSION

Children of all ages may experience short bouts of depression on occasion. Some may demonstrate similar symptoms as depressed adults do, such as sleeping and eating disturbances, low energy, lack of interest in regular activities, inability to concentrate, physical complaints, and a sad, listless, or hopeless affect. Other depressed children may be irritable and look more angry than sad. If the symptoms are not a reaction to some event or disappointment and doesn't resolve in a few days, or if the child expresses self-destructive ideas or indicates she wants to kill herself, a therapy appointment is necessary.

#### 4. ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Lying frequently past the age of seven, living in a fantasy world, a pattern of stealing, cruelty to animals and other children, vandalism or fire setting, or being "cool", detached, not well engaged with family and friends, are signs that a child needs professional help. **cont. on page 2**

#### ICE CREAM HEADACHE

Wolfing down an ice cold drink or letting a glob of ice cream slide down your throat can give you an "ice cream headache." The intense pain in the middle of your forehead usually lasts only about 20 seconds but can last for up to five minutes. The most sensitive area that triggers these headaches is the back of the roof of your mouth. Keep it away from that area to avoid pain

### Keep Your Summer Safe

We want you and your family to enjoy a safe summer this year. Here are some important reminders about the sun.

Using sunscreen is the quickest and easiest thing you can do to decrease your risk for skin cancer. You should find one you like and use it regularly. All the high-SPF sunscreens will help block UV (ultra-violet rays) when used with appropriate clothing and dark glasses. In addition, many sunscreens contain parsol, which blocks UVA (the sun's skin-darkening rays) better than others.

Most bad sunburns occur during the cool days of late spring or early summer when people don't realize the UV light is most intense and damaging.

To protect you and your family from the sun's damaging effects you should:

- ? Choose a water-resistant sunscreen if you will be swimming or sweating.
- ? Choose a sunscreen with an SPF of 25 to 30 or more.
- ? Apply sunscreen 30 minutes before sun exposure if possible. Reapply after several hours of sun, as sunlight breaks down sunscreens.
- ? Wear a broad-brimmed hat and protective clothing. Protect lips with a SPF-rated lip balm, applied frequently.
- ? Reduce sun exposure between 10 am and 3 pm.
- ? Keep infants younger than 6 months out of direct sunlight.

**Need to get a hold of us?** Remember, our services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. During especially busy times or after hours your call may be transferred to a medical exchange. There will be a slight silence during the transfer. Please don't hang up! When your call is answered, please let them know if you are experiencing an emergency. Your call will be forwarded to us immediately.

## TROUBLED?

## 5. FEARS AND PHOBIAS

All children have fears and bad dreams and may be irrational about monsters and ghosts. An evaluation is indicated if 1) the child is excessively anxious or worries and fears are interfering with everyday life and new experiences, 2) the child has a phobia (for example fear of spiders or crossing bridges) which is restricting his or the family's activities, 3) anxiety is producing physical complaints such as headaches or stomach aches, 4) a preschool or older child has difficulty separating from parents or has constant need for reassurance, or 5) rituals and obsessive-compulsive behavior (for example hand washing or special movements) indicates that a child may be using "magic" to try to make his world safer.

## 6. SOCIAL WITHDRAWAL

Often children are shy and slow to warm up to people or they prefer smaller groups and take longer to adjust to changes. But if a child is frequently unhappy, says and does things which indicate a low self esteem and lack of confidence in himself, has difficulty making and keeping friends, and tends to isolate himself an evaluation with a therapist is indicated.

## 7. DEVELOPMENTAL REGRESSION

Reverting to an earlier developmental stage is normal for children under stress and sometimes toilet-trained children will wet or older children will talk baby talk or want help with something they usually can do on their own. However, if the regression is not temporary and doesn't resolve itself an evaluation is indicated.

If you are concerned or feel that your child is in need of an evaluation, call HBA for a referral to a counselor in your area.

FEDERAL EMPLOYEE  
MENTAL HEALTH PARITY

The Federal government has established a mental health parity policy for their 9 million employees and they hope this will serve as a model for states struggling with their own, similar laws. The guidelines stipulate that private health plans for federal employees may not impose higher co-payments and deductibles for mental health services than for physical services. Nor may insurers impose limits on outpatient visits and hospital days for mental disorders than those for general medical care. The rules cover alcohol/drug abuse treatment and treatment serious mental health issues.

## Five Ways to ARGUE FAIRLY

Arguments are natural in any relationship. The problem comes when arguments turn ugly and hurtful. Words can injure deeply. They can cause emotional scars that can be difficult to heal.

To keep your arguments from going too far south, here are five guidelines to use. These guidelines won't keep your relationship argument-free, but they'll likely keep the arguments you do have from becoming too hurtful.



**No name-calling.** Never, ever call a partner a hurtful name. Try the five-second rule (below) to choose words that are appropriate and relevant to the disagreement.



**Try the five-second rule.** Because we sometimes say things without thinking of the consequences, wait five seconds before you comment on something your partner said. Use this time to exercise control and think about what you should say.



**Stick to the issue at hand.** Going back to something that was said or done five years ago will only escalate the disagreement. It also shows that you have some unaddressed issues that you need to tend to.



**Manage your anger.** Anger is a natural emotion, especially when you're having a disagreement. But don't allow your anger to turn violent. If you feel your anger reaching that point, leave the scene immediately and do something safe to calm yourself down ("safe" as in no drugs or alcohol and no driving the car away on all cylinders).



**Speak and act in love.** Remember with whom you're arguing. If it's a marriage partner, it's someone you chose to love and cherish always. Although that's probably the last thing on your mind when you're having a disagreement, it should be the first.

HBA is your 24-hour employee assistance program. Eligible employees and family members may call for confidential assistance with personal, legal, childcare, financial, alcohol/drug and other problems. HBA has identified a variety of community resources and self help associations. Also available is a panel of professional counselors and hospitals that have agreed to provide free or low cost counseling and treatment services to persons who have been referred by Human Behavior Associates. Dial 1-800-937-7770 for information or assistance.