

End-of-Year Teen Stress: A Parent's Reference Card

Normal stress vs. watch-list signs vs. time to act

Most spring stress in teens is real but recoverable. The signs that suggest a real problem are not the usual ones. They are the patterns of withdrawal, hopelessness, and persistent change in behavior that do not lift on weekends or after a school break. Use this card as a parent's framework, not a clinical diagnosis.

Behavior	Normal Range	Watch List	Time to Act
Sleep	<input type="checkbox"/> Some late nights, rough mornings, recovers on weekends	<input type="checkbox"/> Disrupted sleep most nights for 2+ weeks	<input type="checkbox"/> Severe insomnia, or sleeping 12+ hours daily for weeks
Appetite	<input type="checkbox"/> Shifts on stress days, evens out	<input type="checkbox"/> Persistent change for 2+ weeks	<input type="checkbox"/> Notable weight change, skipping meals, or new rigid rules around food
Social	<input type="checkbox"/> More alone time, lower social energy, still shows up to dinner	<input type="checkbox"/> Pulling away from close friends, declining invitations they would normally accept	<input type="checkbox"/> Cutting off friends entirely, isolating from family for days
Academics	<input type="checkbox"/> Procrastinating, complaining, getting it done	<input type="checkbox"/> Letting things slip that used to matter to them, missing assignments	<input type="checkbox"/> Stopped trying entirely, hiding grades, refusing to discuss school
Mood	<input type="checkbox"/> Snappy, eye-rolling, irritable, recovers	<input type="checkbox"/> Sustained irritability, more crying than usual, flatness	<input type="checkbox"/> Persistent hopelessness, anger that scares you, blunted affect
Communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Shorter answers, less chatty, still present	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoiding conversations, leaving the room when you enter	<input type="checkbox"/> Refusing to talk, secretive, lying about whereabouts
Talk about school	<input type="checkbox"/> "I hate this." "I cannot wait for summer."	<input type="checkbox"/> "Nothing I do matters." "I am so far behind."	<input type="checkbox"/> "What is the point." "It does not matter if I do well."
Talk about self	<input type="checkbox"/> "I am tired." "I am stressed."	<input type="checkbox"/> "I cannot do anything right." "Everyone hates me."	<input type="checkbox"/> Statements about hopelessness, being a burden, or things not getting better

How to use this card. Check off what you are seeing. If most of what your teen is showing falls in the **Normal Range** column, you are looking at a normal kid having a hard May. If **multiple behaviors** land in the Watch List column, or **any single behavior** lands in Time to Act, it is time to make a call. Flip this card over for who to call.

Who to Call When

Five different kinds of support, and when each one is the right call

Different concerns need different help. A study coach is not a therapist. A pediatrician is not a school counselor. Use this guide to figure out the right first call, and write in the names and numbers for your family so you have them when you need them.

1. In a Crisis

Call now. Do not wait.

If your teen has expressed thoughts of self-harm, said anything that worries you about safety, or is in acute distress.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (call or text, 24/7) · **911** for emergencies · Or go to your nearest hospital ER

2. Pediatrician

When you do not know where to start.

For persistent physical changes (sleep, appetite, energy, headaches, stomach issues), or when you want a clinical opinion before deciding what kind of support your teen needs. Pediatricians can refer to local adolescent therapists.

Our pediatrician: _____

3. School Counselor

When the issue is school-specific.

For a class your teen has fallen too far behind in, a teacher relationship that has broken down, accommodations that are not being honored, or to use a mental-health day intentionally. Often the fastest path to something practical happening this week.

Our school counselor: _____

4. Therapist or Mental Health Provider

When the issue is mental health.

For persistent low mood, anxiety interfering with daily life, panic, disordered eating, or hopelessness lasting more than two weeks. Most pediatric practices in Fairfield County and Westchester can refer; the Child Mind Institute is a well-regarded clinical resource for adolescents.

Our therapist: _____

5. Academic Support (S4)

When disorganization is feeding the stress.

For students whose stress is partly driven by feeling buried under disorganization, weak study systems, or a workload they do not have the tools to manage. Sometimes the academic side is the lever that takes pressure off the emotional side. We will tell you honestly when it is not.

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When in doubt, start with the pediatrician. They can route you to the right next step, including referrals to local clinicians and any conversations with the school. You do not need to be sure something is wrong before you make a call. Calling is what these phone numbers are for.