



**Growing Pains:  
Developmental Appropriateness vs. Cause for Concern**

Keeping up with the developmental changes your child undergoes through the lifespan can be a challenge. For parents who are parenting children/adolescents with mental health disorders, it can become increasingly more difficult to determine developmental appropriateness vs. cause for concern.

| Developmental Stage                  | Expected Growing Pains  | Potential Developmental Concerns  |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Infancy<br/>(Birth-18 months)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete dependence on caregiver</li> <li>Neediness, especially for physical touch</li> <li>Distressed when caregiver is away</li> <li>Sensitivity to the environment</li> <li>Engaging with objects by putting them in their mouth</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of attachment to caregiver</li> <li>Sleeping for less than 14 hours a day</li> <li>Unable to be soothed by caregiver, experiences extensive periods of distress</li> <li>Significant weight loss</li> <li>Lack of social connection to caregiver</li> </ul> |

| Developmental Stage                         | Expected Growing Pains  | Potential Developmental Concerns  |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Toddlerhood<br/>(18 months- 3 years)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High degree of sensitivity to changes in daily routine</li> <li>Anxiety surrounding separation from caregiver</li> <li>Tantrums</li> <li>Increased independence accompanied by intense frustration, especially with difficult tasks</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Doubt and shame in completing tasks on their own</li> <li>Fearing movement (i.e., crawling, walking) on their own</li> <li>Refusing to be held</li> <li>Struggles with eating and feeding</li> <li>Lack of speech or attempts to speak</li> <li>Little or no desire to socially engage with caregiver</li> </ul> |

| Developmental Stage                    | Expected Growing Pains   | Potential Developmental Concerns  |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Preschool<br/>(3 years-5 years)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asking an excessive number of questions</li> <li>Imaginary friends and pretend play</li> <li>Restlessness, struggles to sit completely still, and high energy</li> <li>High interest in showing off new skills to anyone who will pay attention</li> <li>Assumes that others have the same memories they have (i.e., to a peer “remember when we saw grandma”)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less than a 200-word vocabulary</li> <li>Lack of finger dexterity (i.e., they may struggle to hold a fork, pencil, button up shirts or tie shoelaces)</li> <li>Doesn’t respond to their name</li> <li>Highly fearful or anxious</li> <li>Loss of skills they once learned</li> <li>Dissociation (i.e., can look like slow breathing and staring off into space for periods longer than 5 minutes)</li> </ul> |

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|--|--|--|
| <b>Early School Age<br/>(5 years-12 years)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of interest in caregiver</li> <li>Sensitivity to peer rejections</li> <li>Requires specific steps and guidance in completing menial tasks (i.e., room clean up or homework)</li> <li>Likely to need guidance with hygiene issues as they learn to bathe themselves</li> <li>Frequent disagreements with friends</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intense separation anxiety (i.e., always “sick” and requests to stay home from school or social events)</li> <li>Excessive worry about the future</li> <li>Sluggish energy, especially concerning if there’s a sudden onset</li> <li>Lack of interest in playtime or building peer relationships</li> <li>Spiteful or resentful behavior</li> </ul> |

| Developmental Stage                          | Expected Growing Pains   | Potential Developmental Concerns  |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Teenage Years<br/>(12 years-18 years)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Believing they know more about life than caregivers</li> <li>Feeling misunderstood or that they are the only one who experiences what they feel</li> <li>Self-centeredness, lack of tact, or lacking thoughtfulness</li> <li>Embarrassment or defensiveness when they are wrong or have made a mistake</li> <li>Valuing peer acceptance and relationships above relationships with family and others</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extreme secretiveness, especially if onset is sudden</li> <li>Self-harm or harming others (including animals)</li> <li>Bedwetting</li> <li>Excessive sleep or lack of interest in what used to bring them joy</li> <li>Coercive sexual behaviors</li> <li>Manipulative peers and caregivers</li> </ul> |

This information is for educational purposes only. If you have concerns for your child at any developmental stage, consult your child’s pediatrician. Please reach out to our Admissions Team at **916.623.7215** or <https://lightfully.com/admissions/> to see if Lightfully Behavioral Health may be the right choice for you and your adolescent.