



**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 (Birth-18 months)</b>	Complete dependence on caregiver Neediness, especially for physical touch Distressed when caregiver is away Sensitivity to the environment Engaging with objects by putting them in their mouth	Lack of attachment to caregiver Sleeping for less than 14 hours a day Unable to be soothed by caregiver, experiences extensive periods of distress Significant weight loss Lack of social connection to caregiver

Developmental Stage	Expected Growing Pains	Potential Developmental Concerns
<b>Toddlerhood (18 months- 3 years)</b>	High degree of sensitivity to changes in daily routine Anxiety surrounding separation from caregiver Tantrums Increased independence accompanied by intense frustration, especially with difficult tasks	Doubt and shame in completing tasks on their own Fearing movement (i.e., crawling, walking) on their own Refusing to be held Struggles with eating and feeding Lack of speech or attempts to speak Little or no desire to socially engage with caregiver

Developmental Stage	Expected Growing Pains	Potential Developmental Concerns
<b>Preschool (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>

Developmental Stage	Expected Growing Pains	Potential Developmental Concerns
<b>Early School Age (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 (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.