

The transition to adulthood is an exciting and challenging time for children and their parents. This important transitional stage of life presents challenges as they are now considered adults and have increased expectations on being able to function with less support from their families.



Typical developmental milestones for ages 18 to 26 years:

- Act impulsively or not fully understand potential long-term consequences as they are continuing to develop and mature
- Cognitively, they're gaining a greater understanding of the world and their place in it by questioning what is right and wrong and further developing their own set of morals and values
- Socially, relationships mature and may be more intimate, they feel independent as well as enjoy being part of a group
- Sexually, they're exploring more as well as continuing to explore their sexual orientation
- Emotionally, they're empathizing and connecting more with others, however, they may show signs of impulsivity and have unpredictable emotional responses
- Career is important to them, they are focused on their future and setting goals to achieve success

Mental illness is more prevalent during this period than physical illness and many mental disorders become apparent for the first time: severe mood, bipolar, substance use, psychotic and personality disorders. The most **common** mental health issues that affect this age group are depressive and anxiety disorders.

Suicidal ideation may also be present. Unfortunately, only about **25%** of young adults with mental health needs will reach out for professional support.

If you notice any behavior that concerns you, talk to your child directly and encourage them to discuss it with their pediatrician.



Great ways to connect with and support your young adult:

- Start the conversation by asking open-ended questions to engage with them. Ask about school, work, relationships, friends and any issues they're having
 - Once you're in a conversation, you can ask more direct questions about their mood, substance use, sexuality, body image, stress, appetite, anxiety, sleep and suicidal ideation
 - It's helpful to have these conversations over time and let them know you're there for them
 - Avoid "W" questions: who what, when, where, how, and why, as it often makes people defensive and less likely to share

Getting help early is better. Never worry alone. Consult your pediatrician.

