

What to Expect from Adolescent Students Dealing with Loss or Trauma

While no one reacts to trauma in the same way, adolescents may exhibit the following behaviors when dealing with trauma or loss:

- Depending on their maturity level, they may react to crises like many adults.
- This age-group is particularly prone to oppositional and aggressive behavior to regain a sense of control.
- They may be more willing to talk to people outside their family about their feelings.

Typical reactions could include:

- Increased moodiness or irritability
- Decreased concentration
- Increase in behavioral difficulties (oppositional/defiant behavior)
- Poor school performance or attendance
- Withdrawal
- Somatic complaints (headaches & stomachaches)

Severe reactions to trauma are rare and not always indicative of a mental illness. If symptoms don't go away or begin to interfere with the adolescent's day-to-day life, they should be brought to the attention of a licensed medical or mental health professional. Severe reactions could include:

- Hypervigilance/panic attacks
- Extremely inappropriate and repeated aggression towards others
- Self-injurious behavior
- Suicidal or homicidal ideation
- Severe depression and loss of interest in most activities
- Taking excessive precautions (only sleeping with a weapon nearby)
- Substance abuse

Note. Adapted from: School crisis prevention and intervention: The PREPaRE model (3rd ed.)