

DISTINGUISHING TEENAGE, TRANSITIONAL, AND PATHOLOGICAL SPLITTING BEHAVIOURS



SCENARIOS	TEENAGE BEHAVIOUR	NORMAL TRANSITIONAL BEHAVIOUR	PATHOLOGICAL BEHAVIOUR (SPLITTING)
Spending time in own room	It is usual for teenagers to spend over 50% of their time in their room.	Goes to room on return from the other parent for up to two hours, doesn't seem to be doing much but eventually emerges and joins the family.	Refuses to leave the room, wants to eat in the room. Refuses to allow people into the room.
Arguing with parents	It is usual for teens to argue with parents and at times become challenging. When the boundary is held (albeit with some parental understanding, reasoning and concession as necessary) after calming down, teen will fall in line with parental requirement.	Comes back from the other parent's home being argumentative and challenging. Takes some time to settle but responds when the boundary is held with understanding and empathy, but firmness consistency.	Lacks any respect or empathy, Creates a sense that conflict is imminent and forces parent to shift their own behaviours in response due to fear of conflict emerging. Holding boundaries, even with empathy, has little impact. Defiance, anger, and intolerance of the presence of parent even on calming down. Critically absent after the matter has clearly blown over is any normal apology, remorse, or contrition.
Rude to others and self-absorbed	All teens become self-absorbed at various points during the teen transitions. Being rude to others and focusing on the self to the <i>exclusion of others</i> is transitory in most teens, who can be reminded that the values of the home they live in allow for privacy, personal space, and their own choices, but do not allow for too much self-focus. When parent lets go to let child self-regulate, child is able to do so.	Appears to be inward focused and speaks in monotone, is grumpy or monosyllabic during the first couple hours after return from the other parent. May appear to be challenging position in hierarchy and be competing for position with parent. When parent holds the boundary with the implicit sense that ' <i>I am the parent and you are the child</i> ' the behaviour recedes.	Silent, ruse to extreme, selfish and lacking in empathy for others, such as those connected to the parent being rejected. Refuses to consider other people's feelings, appears unable to recognise that other people have feelings, increases this behaviour when challenged and escalates to defiance and refusal. Stops looking at the parent, will not meet the gaze. (Denotes attachment shut down). No remorse or resolution on calming down. Letting go to enable child to self-regulate, has no impact, with lack of remorse and absence of contrition when calm.
Idealisation of the other parent and family	Many teens will compare their parents and will find parental weak spots in doing so. This can feel cruel and sometimes deliberate. When the teen is challenged, they will revert to a less difficult attitude.	Comes back from the other parent in a mood and compares everything to the other parent's home, complains that things are not good enough. When directly challenged, will argue and may make threats to run away back to preferred place, but temporary until calms down. Will then let go of the complaints as the transition period ends.	Is completely lacking in empathy and is cruel to the point of deliberate comparison and denigration. Refuses to show any respect and sees the rejected parent as an obstacle to getting what they want. May make threats to run away if not allowed to return to their preferred place, does not shift even after calming down. Critically, no remorse or contrition even in face of later attempts to reconcile, out of character to their temperament.