

Dr. Sheryl Research Summary

Dr. Sheryl Gonzalez Ziegler Research Summary

Why an 8-Year-Old is Acting Like a Moody Teen (Based on Dr. Ziegler's Research)

Early Puberty is the Primary Culprit

According to Dr. Ziegler's research, **puberty is starting much earlier than previous generations** - now beginning as young as **8 years old in girls and 9 in boys**. This represents a significant shift that many parents aren't prepared for.

The Perfect Storm: Early Puberty + Developing Brains + Modern Stressors

Dr. Ziegler identifies what she calls a "pivotal sea change" in children's development, created by three converging factors:

- 1. Hormonal Changes Without Emotional Readiness** - 8-year-olds are experiencing the same hormonal fluctuations that traditionally occurred in 11-13 year olds - Their brains are still developing the emotional regulation skills needed to handle these changes - This creates the "moody teen" behavior in a much younger child
- 2. Ill-Equipped Developing Brains** - The prefrontal cortex (responsible for emotional regulation and decision-making) isn't fully developed until the mid-20s - When puberty hits earlier, there's an even bigger gap between hormonal changes and brain development - This manifests as mood swings, emotional outbursts, and difficulty managing feelings
- 3. Modern Stressors That Didn't Exist Before** Dr. Ziegler emphasizes that today's children face:
 - **Social media pressure and comparison** from a very young age - **Cyberbullying** beyond traditional playground bullying
 - **Screen time addiction** affecting emotional regulation - **Academic and social pressures** intensified by constant connectivity

What Parents Are Seeing

From Dr. Ziegler's clinical practice, the most common issues in 8-year-olds include:

Generalized Anxiety Disorders (her #1 diagnosis for ages 7+): - Perfectionism and fear of failure - Reluctance to try new things - Black-and-white thinking - Difficulty with emotional regulation

Mood-Related Changes: - Increased irritability and emotional volatility - Social relationship complications - Communication challenges with parents - Body image concerns starting earlier

Dr. Ziegler's Key Insight

She notes that **parents often don't recognize early puberty as the underlying cause** of behavioral changes. Many assume it's just a "phase" or behavioral issue, when it's actually a developmental shift requiring different parenting approaches.

The Solution Focus

Through her clinical work, Dr. Ziegler emphasizes: - **Early education** about physical and emotional changes - **Open communication** between parents and children about feelings - **Recognizing the signs** of early puberty to respond appropriately - **Building emotional regulation skills** before the full onset of adolescence

Bottom Line: An 8-year-old acting like a moody teen is likely experiencing early puberty in a world with unprecedented stressors, creating a mismatch between their hormonal development and their emotional/cognitive readiness to handle these changes.

More information from Dr. Sheryl Gonzalez Ziegler

Professional Background: Dr. Sheryl Gonzalez Ziegler is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist specializing in children and families, with 20+ years of experience. She runs a private practice in Denver, Colorado, and is particularly known for her expertise on middle childhood (ages 6-12) and early puberty.

Free Resources Available:

Professional Website: drsherylziegler.com - **Blog:** Regular posts on parenting, mental health, and child development - **Newsletter:** "Notes From The Couch" - bi-weekly parenting advice - **Topics covered include:** - Mental health fatigue - Perfectionism in children - Teaching kids to listen - FOMO and social media impacts - ADHD support strategies - Gratitude practices for families

YouTube Channel: [DrSherylZiegler](https://www.youtube.com/DrSherylZiegler) - Features videos on middle childhood and early puberty topics - Interview appearances and expert commentary

Podcast: "Dr. Sheryl's PodCouch" - **Focus:** Conversations to reduce stress, depression, anxiety and prevent burnout - **Recent Episodes Include:** - Digital citizenship and screen time - Shame-free parenting strategies - Dopamine addiction in children - Motherhood and work balance - **Available on:** Apple Podcasts, Podbean, and other platforms

Free Quizzes: - "How Well Do You Know Your Tween?" - "Are You Burned Out?"

Media Appearances: - **TV:** Today Show, Katie Couric Show, CNN, NBC, HLN - **Print/Online:** The New York Times, Washington Post, NPR, Elle, Parents Magazine, Real Simple - **Speaking:** TEDx talks, national conferences on parenting and mental health

Published Books: - **“The Crucial Years: The Essential Guide to Mental Health and Modern Puberty in Middle Childhood (Ages 6-12)”** (Available for pre-order, releases May 6, 2025) - **“Mommy Burnout™”** (Award-winning bestseller)

Paid Course: “Start With The Talk®” (\$97) - Mother-daughter puberty education course