

# Great Lakes Paranormal Research Team

## Children, Youth and The Paranormal

As the decades have come and gone in the paranormal field, there is one thing we learned; children and youth are more susceptible to paranormal situations. What do we mean exactly? Well, children see and hear events more than adults do and teens have a strong curiosity for the unknown. Youth can either have a gift in the field or get themselves into scraps. So we will address details to help investigators and parents alike.

We will address children here first. They are the most vulnerable to the issue. This section will address kids from ages 1-10. Ages 11-17 for this write-up, they will be considered youth/teens.

### Children and the Paranormal:

How do we know if it is the child's imagination or truly paranormal? In the field of psychology, it is estimated that children will interact with an "imaginary" friend from ages 3 to around 7, give or take. These imaginary friends or relationships for the most part are positive but can be on the negative side at times. It just all depends on where the child is maturing, how their understanding of human relationships are going and of course, and the development of their vivid imagination.

When it comes to the paranormal, things can present themselves differently. How can you tell between a possible imaginary friend or something paranormal? It takes listening to the child. Their descriptions of the experience can be key. There are certain experiences that for sure are imaginary and others that the child certainly could not make up due to limited knowledge and current skill sets. If you find yourself saying "she / he could not have possibly known that", it will be important to pay attention. Therefore, not all imaginary friends are truly imaginary. It is important to listen carefully. Never dismiss, make fun, or ignore what the child is sharing, especially if they are fearful. Make sure the child knows you listened and you care about their stress. It could be a passing faze and nothing more.

However, if the problem persists, see if there is something concrete that could be triggering the dreams, nightmares, visual/auditory experiences, lack of sleep and fears. Check their TV shows, tablet or computer use, activities with friends and family, etc. How are their relationships going with friends/family/school? If all seems normal and healthy, try making some adjustments to their physical environment, such as placing a nightlight in their room, hallway or bathroom. Change their bed or room around a bit, have them help decorate. Have them help create a safe environment. Make sure there are no shadows being casted from objects in the room. If there is traffic going by casting shadows in the room, place a double-sided curtain in the room, which can block the incoming shadows casted by the cars outside. Some parents have used baby monitors temporarily to keep tabs on things while the child sleeps. This can also provide useful information about their sleep patterns. It can be discontinued once the issue has been resolved.

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What if the parent begins to detect odd occurrences that match what the child has been sharing? Then you want to be more cautious and curious. You really want to begin to get to the bottom of things, especially if the child begins to show high levels of emotional distress, bite marks, burns, scratches, torn clothing, or begins to follow odd or risky instructions given to the child by an unknown “source”. It will be of help to consider connecting with a paranormal team for help, seek counseling for the child or both. Nothing should be ruled out. Anything to promote child safety will be a good move. It will be up to the parent which supportive services to use first, counseling or a paranormal team. Both can help evaluate the situation and see what is needed. Of course they will have different approaches, but either will be a good place to start.

Be aware that children are more vulnerable physically and emotionally to paranormal events. Why? Children are not predigest or judgmental like adults. Kids don't have the ability to make mature or sensible decisions yet regarding right from wrong and can be lead easily. They are very open to what “is” and go with it.

They don't know yet that “ghost don't exist” up to about age 10. In the child's mind, ghosts *could* exist. If my friends say so or the TV says they do, then why not? As adults we have been told about many things that are just not possible, so naturally we block it out and reject what can't be known or proven.

If you decide to bring in a team to investigate: it is best to not have the child there the night of the investigation. This might increase and/or confirm the child's fears and make things worse for the child emotionally and you want to avoid that pit-fall. Keep it all low key. Giving support to your child and making sure they get a good night's sleep every night, will be important in the entire process.

### **Action points with children:**

- Listen. Let the child know you care about what they have to say.
- Evaluate. Ask questions in the format of “what” and “how”. That way you reduce the possibility of leading the child in believing what you think the situation is.
- Look into the child's concerns. Check out possibilities, whether human or other.
- Seek clarity. If no clear explanation is found and the problem has continued, start thinking of seeking support/consultation.
- Intervention. Create a plan that will help the child reduce or eliminate fear, stress, lack of sleep.
- Re-evaluate in a few days to see how the plan is working and make adjustments as needed.

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### Teens and the Paranormal:

Teenagers are very curious and are exploring right around this age. What can't quite be explained fascinates them. Teens tend to watch Ghost Hunters International, Ghost Adventures, Ghost Hunters and whatever other show which has the paranormal at its core. Many teens will seek getting into ghost hunting whether as a group of friends or seek to join an already established team. This author was on a case in which the teen in the home actually convinced his poor aunt that their home was terribly haunted; which in turn caused the aunt to become nervous and contact a paranormal team to resolve the issue that did not exist in the first place. Oh the thrill! Of course during our investigation we discovered the dynamics and had a heart to heart talk with the young paranormal enthusiast. Problem solved!

A special note to parents: most experienced teams will not allow youth as part of their team until they turn 18. Why? For a long list of reasons, 1-We never want to put a minor in possible harms way for any reason at any time or any location. 2- Sometimes we go into businesses such as construction areas, bars, historic old western brothels, which teens should not enter to begin with. 3-We need every investigator to be independent legally, responsible for thy self financially, emotionally and have their own reliable transportation. 4- Investigating can last until late hours of the night and sometimes into the early hours of the morning. 5- The paranormal for the most part is safe and very subtle. But once in a blue moon it can get rocky and a bit risky. The list goes on, but these are some of the top reasons for us not to have minors on our teams. There is certainly nothing wrong with training them early and have them help with stuff in the background. That way when they do reach 18, they will know and handle the ropes well. But for now, sorry kids, you will just have to hurry up and wait!

The Ouija board has been another way teens explore the paranormal unknown. Here we would like to add a note to investigators and parents alike. The Ouija board is a piece of cardboard and a plastic puck, made by the Parker Brothers Company and nothing more. The board itself is not the problem. The intent of those playing the Ouija Board can be the origin of the issue.

Another aspect of being teenagers are hormones and emotions. We have learned that teens themselves, have the potential ability to cause poltergeist type activity if very emotional or upset about something in their lives. We know this sounds odd, but we have run into many cases through the years; once the teen has been helped with their life struggles, the activity stops. Cause and effect are quite obvious. This is the reason most experienced paranormal teams will ask if there are teenagers in the home.

On the other end of the spectrum, some teens see the paranormal as very lame. So if you are a parent with possible paranormal issues or an investigator dealing with a family with a teen who laughs the matter off, it is quite normal. If you need to complete an investigation, ship the kid out

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for a night, that way no one suffers from their laughs, jokes, moaning and groaning about the issue.

### **Action points with teens:**

- Listen. Keep the dialogue going until you understand what they are saying.
- The right questions. Ask “what” and “how” questions, also known as none-judgmental questions. (What triggered this? What happened next? How did you deal with that? How did this get started?)
- Collaboration. Ask if there is anything you personally can do for the teen that will help the issue.
- Risky behaviors. Check to see if the teen has become involved in Ouija board sessions, any kind of drug activity (sometimes Ouija board session and drug experimenting go hand in hand), ghost hunting, or possible séance experimentation.
- Intervention plan. Work with the teen on what will be some helpful and safe steps to follow. Develop a plan geared towards reducing or eliminating the teen’s concerns with the paranormal. Help them work towards a plan to reduce/eliminate their fear, stress, lack of sleep. This plan can include meeting a paranormal team and/or a counselor. Counseling does not mean they are crazy, it just means a professional will walk with them until the issue is resolved. A counselor can be someone to talk to other than the “boring and embarrassing” parent. A paranormal team member might be able to become a temporary mentor until things have improved for the teen.
- Re-evaluate. Within about a week or so, see how the plan is going and if any adjustments are needed.

### Conclusion:

Over all, the main goal is to keep all kids and youth safe. We adults for the most part, can handle it, but children and youth are more vulnerable to what can’t be seen or heard. So let us all do our part to help them remain safe, happy and go about their normal and playful lives.