

More Than Sad: Teen Mental Health

Student Handout

Depression is more than sadness.

Depression is an illness with a biological basis. People who are depressed feel “down in the dumps” and are not interested in the activities they usually enjoy. Other symptoms that a depressed teen may experience include:

- feeling more irritable or angry than usual
- losing or gaining a significant amount of weight (not due to diet) or dramatic change in appetite
- having trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- physical feelings of either restlessness or being slow, sluggish
- not having any energy
- feeling worthless or guilty (with no clear cause)
- not being able to concentrate or make decisions
- thinking about wanting to end your life

If you experience at least five of these symptoms most of the day for at least two weeks, you may be depressed.

Talk to your parent(s), a trusted adult, or your doctor immediately — don't wait!!

When you are depressed, depression may affect many aspects of your life.

Your ability to do well in school, to enjoy hanging out with friends, and to play sports and engage in extracurricular activities can all be negatively affected when you are depressed.

If you are depressed, you are not alone.

Depression is the most common mental illness in the U.S. among teens and adults, and can have a serious impact on the lives of many teens who suffer from depression. In any given year, depression will affect 10 to 15 percent of teenagers in the U.S.

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Depression is treatable.

Studies show that more than 80 percent of people with depression can be successfully treated. Effective treatments for depression include medication, psychotherapy (talk therapy) or a combination of the two.

Depression does not go away on its own.

If you are depressed, it is important to begin treatment as soon as possible. Most people who are depressed begin to feel better after a few months of psychotherapy and/or taking medication.

Stress

Some of the things that can help us understand when to be concerned about stress are when the symptoms impede – or get in the way of – normal functioning. For example, if symptoms:

- last more than two weeks without a break
- are a clear change from someone's usual behavior
- are seen in different situations – like at home, school, with friends – so you know they aren't just in response to a specific situation

Alcohol & Other Drugs and Mental Health

- It may seem to help at first, but it always makes it worse in the long run
- Alcohol is a brain depressant (i.e. prolonged use tends to make people more depressed over time)
- Alcohol and other drugs can worsen many symptoms of depression, such as irritability, trouble sleeping, concentration

Addressing Depression effectively may include

- Talk therapy or counseling
- Antidepressant Medication
- A combination of these two approaches, and
- Engaging in life with "healthy habits"

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Activity:

Take five minutes to discuss the following questions in your team. Choose one person to share your ideas at the end.

- What could you do if you think you notice possible signs of depression in a peer?
- What could you do if you think you notice possible signs of depression in yourself?
- Who are some of the resources you can access or people you can talk to if you have a concern about yourself or someone else?

Your school contact for mental health concerns:

Resource List for Teens

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a 24-hour, toll-free suicide prevention service available to anyone in suicidal crisis. You will be routed to the closest possible crisis center in your area. Your call is free and confidential. Even if you are not in a suicidal crisis, you can call the Lifeline if you just need to talk to someone who cares, are concerned about a friend, or need a referral to a mental health professional in your area.

English Lifeline Number: 1 (800) 273-TALK (8255)

Spanish Language Lifeline Number/ Para obtener asistencia en español durante las 24 horas, llame al: 1 (888) 628-9454

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

For information in Spanish/Para información en español:

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/Spanish/Default.aspx

Crisis Text Line

Crisis Text Line provides free, 24/7 crisis support by text. Text TALK to 741741 from anywhere in the USA to be connected to a trained Crisis Counselor.

What Students can do

- **Chalk Campaign** Write the number on sidewalks, in the parking lot, and on whiteboards in classrooms... every week.
- **Campus Clubs & Publications** Activate student groups to spread the word. Write an article about Crisis Text Line and the data at crisistrends.org in the school newspaper. Create a recurring ad in the newspaper promoting the resource.
- **Announcements** Include 741741 or Crisis Text Line's PSA video on morning video announcements.
- **Social Media** Post on Twitter, Tumblr, and Facebook so that your friends know where to turn in crisis: Text TALK to 741741

Seize the Awkward

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young adults. 76% of young adults turn to a friend in a time of crisis. Visit SeizeTheAwkward.org to learn how to empower young adults to start and continue a conversation with friends who are struggling with their mental health.



American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention

D.A.R.E.