

TEENAGE DEPRESSION

Depression is a common emotional disorder affecting people of all ages. In adolescents, the pain of depression is often witnessed by drug abuse, eating disorders, truancy, delinquency, or even suicide. Depression can be the result of many things, the most common is stress. It is important to remember that depression can be a fatal disease. The sooner it is diagnosed the better the chances are that it can be effectively treated. Severe depression does not go away quickly on its own.

WARNING SIGNS

The two most significant signs are:

1. Feelings of sadness, hopelessness, worry, and irritability
2. Lack of interest in most activities (e.g., sports, hobbies, family and friends) indicating a change in their normal pattern

Other signs are:

1. Poor appetite and weight loss or excessive eating and weight gain
2. Sleep disturbances, insomnia, early morning awakening or excessive sleeping
3. Loss of energy, persistent boredom, listlessness or fatigue
4. Diminished ability to concentrate, decline in quality of school work
5. Agitation, violent or rebellious behavior inconsistent with “normal” adolescent rebellion
6. Major personality change
7. Complaints about physical symptoms such as stomachache or headache
8. Self-reproach or inappropriate guilt
9. Recurrent thoughts of death or any suicidal thoughts or behavior

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

1. Be informed. It is important that you are aware of the signs and symptoms of stress and depression.
2. Talk. Ask questions about what you are seeing. Convey a sense of support, understanding and openness to talk about anything.
3. Listen. Often kids are experiencing so much pain that they cannot talk about what is really bothering them. Listen with your eyes and ears as kids often deny problems.
4. Empathize. Take a young person’s problems seriously. Often we tend to minimize their importance and view their problems through “adult eyes.”
5. Get help. Know what resources are available. If a child has thoughts of suicide or harming themselves, ***do not leave the child alone, get immediate professional help.***
6. Support. Identify the major problems and examine possible solutions - concentrate on strengths and past problem solving skills. Formulate a plan, set it in action by taking small steps. Get your child future-oriented; make some plans for the weekend or midweek.

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