

Understanding Depression

A Guide for Teens, Parents, and Caregivers



AT THE FOREFRONT OF **KIDS'** MEDICINE®

UChicago Medicine

Comer Children's

Understanding Depression

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Understanding Depression

Teen depression is more than just being moody. Being a teenager can be hard, but it does not need to feel hopeless. If you have been feeling sad most of the time for a few weeks or longer and you cannot concentrate or do the things you used to enjoy, talk to an adult you trust about depression.

Depression in Children and Teens

Depression is common in children and teens, and it can look very different than it does in adults. Children who are depressed may seem cranky rather than sad, or lose interest in others, or expect bad things to happen in the future. Some depressed children seem tired and not motivated, others may seem restless.

Almost all children can feel bad in these ways sometimes, this is normal. However, this is a problem when kids get stuck feeling sad, down, or upset. The good news is, there are some effective ways to help children feel better and manage their feelings, so they do not get stuck.

What We Think and Do Changes How We Feel

We are all affected by the things we think to ourselves and by the things we do in response to our feelings. If it is raining and you think, now all my plans are ruined, you may feel pretty bad. You may respond by just going back to bed and sleep all day. If you did that, you may miss out on lots of chances to feel better.

However, you may say to yourself, I am glad it is raining now I can stay inside and finish that great book I have been reading. By thinking this way, you will feel happy, and do something you enjoy.

Children who have a difficult time with sad or cranky moods are more likely to have negative thoughts about events in their lives. They are also less likely to choose activities that will help them feel better.

In this program, your child will learn ways to improve their mood by changing thoughts, changing behaviors, or changing both.



Knowing if You Have Depression

Depression is different for everyone. You may have many symptoms or just a few.

- Often feeling sad, worried, worthless, or even empty
- No interest in things you used to enjoy
- Getting easily frustrated, irritable, or angry
- Not wanting to be with friends and family
- School grades falling
- Changed eating or sleeping habits
- Being very tired or having memory loss
- Thinking about suicide or harming yourself

Getting Help for Depression

You are not alone, and help is here. You can feel better. To get help:

- **Talk to a trusted adult** about how you have been feeling (such as your parent or guardian, teacher, or school counselor).
- **Ask your doctor** about options for professional help. Depression can be treated with psychotherapy (also called talk therapy), medication, or both medication and talk therapy.
- **Try to spend time with friends or family**, even if you do not feel like you want to.
- **Stay active and exercise**, even if it is just going for a walk. Physical activity releases chemicals, such as endorphins in your brain that can help you feel better.
- **Try to keep a regular sleep plan.** (going to bed and waking up at the same time each day)
- **Eat healthy foods.**



Go to pages 8 to 12 for a list of resources.

What You Need to Know About Suicide

Most people who are depressed do not commit suicide. But depression increases the risk for suicide or suicide attempts. It is not true that people who talk about suicide do not try it.

Suicidal thoughts, talking about suicide, or attempts at suicide are always serious. If any of these happen to you or a friend, tell a responsible adult right away. There is help and people who care.

If you are thinking of hurting yourself there is help.

You can call or text the **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline** at **988**.

You can go online to www.988lifeline.org to talk with trained crisis counselors 24 hours a day 7 days a week



You can also go the nearest Emergency Room or call 911.

What to Watch For

Signs and Symptoms of Teen Depression

- Sadness or feeling hopeless
- Irritability, anger, or hostility
- Tearfulness or often crying
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Loss of interest in activities
- Not doing well in school
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits
- Restlessness and being nervous
- Feeling worthless and having guilt
- Lack of enthusiasm and motivation
- Being very tired or lack of energy
- Difficulty concentrating
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Thoughts of death or suicide. (Must see a mental health professional. If they are serious and may hurt themselves, go to an emergency room.)

If a teen has more than a few of these signs they may have depression and need professional help. You cannot make them want to get better, but there are some things you can do. It starts with simply being there for them.

Suicide Warning Signs in Depressed Teens

Very depressed teens, and those who abuse alcohol or drugs, often think about, speak of, or make attempts at suicide, and many of them are successful. **Suicide warning signs include:**

- Cutting or self-harm
- Talking or joking about committing suicide
- Saying things such as I would be better off dead, I wish I could disappear forever or there is no way out.
- Speaking in a positive way about death or thinking death is romantic (If I died, people may love me more)
- Writing stories and poems about death, dying, or suicide
- Taking part in reckless behavior or having a lot of accidents causing injury
- Giving away personal belongings
- Saying goodbye to friends and family as if for the last time
- Trying to get weapons, pills, or looking for other ways to kill themselves



Tips to Helping Depressed Teens

Tip 1: Be Supportive

- One of the most important things you can do for your teen is to work on building a stronger relationship with them. Try to build understanding by seeing yourself in their place.
- Affirm their feelings, not their unhealthy behaviors.
- Do not judge them or try to solve their problems, even if you disagree with their point of view. By listening to them talk about their problems you are letting them know that you hear them, you see them, and you are trying to understand them not fix them.

Tip 2: Help Them Make Social Connections

- Set aside time each day to talk
- Do what you can to keep your teen connected to others
- Suggest activities such as sports, after-school clubs, or an art, dance, or music class

Tip 3: Make Physical Health a Priority

- Get your teen moving
- Set limits on screen time (Television, phone and computer time)
- Provide healthy, balanced meals
- Make sure they get plenty of sleep

Tip 4: Take Care of Yourself (and the rest of the family)

As a parent, you may find yourself focusing all your energy and attention on your depressed teen and forgetting your own needs and the needs of other family members.

It is very important that you keep taking care of yourself during this difficult time. It can be emotionally and physically exhausting (feeling very tired and overwhelmed) to be a parent of someone who is struggling with depression.

Above all, this means reaching out for much needed support. You cannot do everything on your own and need the help of family and friends. Having your own support system in place will help you stay healthy and positive as you work to help your teen. Know that you are not alone and get support for yourself.

Look after your health. The stress of your teen's depression can affect your own moods and emotions. Support your health and well-being by eating right, getting plenty of sleep, and making time for things you enjoy.

Remember the siblings. Depression in one child can cause anxiety (feeling stressed and worried) in other family members. Make sure other children are not ignored. Siblings may need special attention or professional help of their own to handle feelings about what is going on.

Do not play the blame game. It can be easy to blame yourself or another family member for your teen's depression. This only adds to an already stressful situation. Depression is often caused by a number of things. It is not likely, except in the case of abuse or neglect, that a loved one is responsible.

Treating Depression

Helping Teens with Depression Get Treatment

Some teens will want to go to therapy when you ask, and some will not. Those who do not want to, are not going to suddenly be open to the idea of therapy (or to you) quickly.

You can help guide them to treatment by opening them to the idea and being patient with them as they come to accept it.

Your teen may tell you to back off. This is just their way of telling you that they need space. It is normal for teenagers to want independence, and it is important for you to respect that.



Treatment Options

There are many treatment options for teens with depression. Make sure that your child has had a complete evaluation that includes treatment recommendations to help guide you.

- In times when it is a crisis and something needs to be done right away, guardians may contact the **Crisis and Referral Entry Services (CARES)** phone line.
- Structured, supervised treatment programs, such as **Intensive Outpatient Programs (IOP)** and **Partial Hospitalization Programs (PHP)**, may be beneficial.
- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**, and **Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)** have been shown to be helpful for teenagers with depression.
- Many teens with depression benefit from medication, such as an anti-depressant. Therapy alone may be effective with mild to moderate depression, but the best results are often from a combination of medication and therapy.

If depression medication is something you are thinking of, it is strongly recommended that you make an appointment with your primary care doctor.

Treatment and Support Services

Screening Assessment and Support Services (SASS)

Screening Assessment and Support Services (SASS) is a crisis mental health service program for children and teens having a psychiatric emergency. They provide intensive mental health services for children and teens who may need to be in the hospital or have community based mental health care.

Any child or teen in a mental health crisis using Medicaid for insurance is eligible for SASS services. A parent or guardian may check to see if their child can get Screening Assessment and Support Services (SASS). Call the Crisis and Referral Entry Services (CARES) crisis line at **1-800-345-9049** or **1-773-523-4505 (TTY)**.

Crisis Helplines

Helplines

- **Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM):** Visit www.thecalmzone.net
- **Crisis Text Line:** Visit www.crisistextline.org/ or Text START to 741-741
- **Lifeline Crisis Chat:** Visit www.crisischat.org/ to talk with crisis centers around the United States.
- **List of International Suicide Hotlines:** Visit www.suicide.org/international-suicide-hotlines.html
- **The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline :** Visit 988lifeline.org to chat, or call or text 988 for access to trained counselors. 988 is also a resource for people if they are worried about a loved one who may need crisis support (this used to be the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255)

Intensive Outpatient Treatment Options

Intensive Outpatient Programs and Partial Hospitalization Programs

Most mental and behavioral disorders are rated mild, moderate, or severe. Often, the more severe needs to have more intensive treatment.

Intensive Outpatient Programs (IOP) and Partial Hospitalization Programs (PHP) are considered outpatient treatment.

- In an IOP, teens or children get treatment 3 to 5 days a week for about 3 hours a day.
- During a PHP, teens or children get treatment 5 days a week for around 5 to 6 hours a day. In both programs, children and teens live at home when getting treatment.

UChicago Medicine Ingalls

19550 Governors Hwy Suite 3700
Flossmoor, IL 60422
Phone: (708) 915-6411
Ages 12 and above

Advocate Christ Hospital

4440 West 95th Street
Oak Lawn IL 60453
Phone: (708) 684-5855
Ages 13 and above

AMITA Mercy Aurora

1330 North Lake Street
Aurora, IL 60506
Phone: (630) 801-2656
All ages

AMITA St. Elizabeth

1431 North Claremont Ave
Chicago, IL 60622
Phone: (312) 491-5220
Ages 13 and above

Change Therapy Center

954 Eastport Centre Drive, Suite B
Valparaiso, IN 46383
Office: (219) 286-6482
Fax: (219)286-7369
office@changetherapycenter.org

Compass Health Center

Many Locations
Phone: (877) 552-6672
Ages 10 to 14

Hartgrove Hospital

5730 West Roosevelt Road
Chicago, IL 60644
Phone: (773) 413-1720
Ages 12 to 17

Riverside Hospital

350 North Wall Street
Kankakee, IL 60901
Phone: (779) 701-2000 ext-46208
Ages 12 to 17

Silver Oaks

1004 Pawlak Pkwy,
New Lenox, IL 60451
Phone: (844) 580-5000
Ages 13 to 17

Local Mental Health Resources

To Find a Therapists in Chicago

The **Psychology Today website** <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us> can help you find resources in your area.

Use the drop-down box to choose the kind of treatment (Therapists, Psychiatrics, Treatment Centers or Support Groups) and enter the city or zip code.

You can then choose options that better meet your needs. You can choose by:

- Issues
- Insurance
- Gender
- Kind of Therapy
- Age
- Price
- Ethnicity Served
- Sexuality
- Language
- Religion

For example:

Therapists in Chicago, IL

View neighborhoods in Chicago ^

Neighborhoods

Andersonville	Lincoln Park	Near West Side	Uptown
Avondale	Lincoln Square	North Center	West Loop
Buena Park	Logan Square	Ravenswood	West Town
Edgewater	Loop	River North	Wicker Park
Hyde Park	Medical Village	South Loop	
Lake View	Near Eastside	Streeterville	
Lakeview East	Near North Side	Ukrainian Village	

Issues ^ Insurance v Gender v Types of Therapy v Age v Price v More... v

Issues

Addiction	Bipolar Disorder	Eating Disorders	Relationship Issues
ADHD	Borderline Personality	Family Conflict	Self Esteem
Anger Management	Child	Grief	Sex Therapy
Anxiety	Depression	Obsessive-Compulsive (OCD)	Sexual Abuse

[Show More Issues](#)

More...

Ethnicity Served	Sexuality	Language	Faith
Black and African American	LGBTQ+	Spanish	Christian
Hispanic and Latino	Lesbian	French	Jewish
Asian	Bisexual	Hindi	Muslim
Native American		Mandarin	Buddhist
Show More Ethnicities		Show More Languages	Show More Faiths

Local Mental Health Resources

CountyCare Member Resources (Chicago Area)

CountyCare has a list of behavioral health providers that work with children and teens.

The **Behavioral Health Consortium (BHC)** is a group of providers who have a single intake with live representatives who can schedule behavioral health care services at any of the Consortium agencies.

Consortium agencies are committed to providing intake appointments within 7 days for all requests, 2 days for urgent needs.

Intake staff speak English and Spanish. Many of the services are also available in Spanish.

Ask your health care team to call CountyCare directly at (844) 433-8793 to refer you to one of the 12 agencies that provide mental health services to children and teens.



Northwest Indiana Resources

- **Clarity Clinic**
9250 Columbia Avenue, Suite E2
Munster, IN 46321
Phone: (219) 595-0043 or (219) 237-2894
info@claritynwi.com
- **Anxiety and OCD Behavioral Health Center**
Main Office
900 Ridge Road, Suite F
Munster, IN 46321
Branch Office
1100 South Calumet Road, Suite 3B
Chesterton, IN 46304
Phone: (219) 228-7630
Fax: (219) 228-1083
- **Mid America Mental Health**
9335 Calumet Avenue, Suite C
Munster, IN 46321
Phone: (219) 595-9494
- **Regional Health Systems**
Go to www.rhs.care to see locations
Main Phone: (219) 769-4005
24 Hour Crisis: (219) 769-4005

Online Mental Health Resources

Apps and Tech Resources

- **Health Talk:** Lived experience of mental health conditions, including research-based modules with hours of recording and analysis. www.healthtalk.org/peoples-experiences/mental-health
- **Mindfulness for Teens:** Resources to help teens use mindfulness to handle stress. Includes apps to practice meditation and guided meditation recordings. <http://mindfulnessforteens.com/>
- **Strength of Us:** An online community made to inspire young adults dealing with mental health issues. Helps them to think positive, stay strong and reach goals with peer support and resource sharing. <http://strengthofus.org/>

Online Resources

- **Reach Out:** Information on mental health disorders. Resources to help teens make safe plans when feeling suicidal, and helpful tips on how to relax. <http://au.reachout.com/>
- **Go Ask Alice:** Question and answer website for young adults with a large database of questions about a variety of concerns surrounding emotional health. www.goaskalice.columbia.edu
- **Girls Health.Gov:** The Your Feelings section of this website offers guidance to teenage girls on knowing about mental health problems, getting help, and talking to parents. <http://girlshealth.gov/feelings/index.html>
- **Jed Foundation:** Promotes emotional health and preventing suicide among college students. An online resource center called **ULifeline**. A public dialogue forum called **Half of Us**. It also has resources and tools to help students transition to college (Transition Year). <http://www.jedfoundation.org/students>

Mental Health Medication Guides

- **Head Meds:** Gives young people focused information about the most common medicines prescribed for mental health conditions. <http://www.headmeds.org.uk/>
- **Making Healthy Choices:** Information for youth in foster care on making decisions about their mental health, treatment options, and the use of psychotropic medications. www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/makinghealthychoices/

Mental Health Resource Institutes

- **National Alliance on Mental Health:** Resources for youth, including information on managing your mental health in college and making friends. www.nami.org/Find-Support/Teens-and-Young-Adults
- **National Institute of Mental Health:** Provides easy-to-read guides and brochures to help better understand many mental health disorders. www.nimh.nih.gov/health/index.shtml