



# Understanding Depression for Teens

## WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Everyone feels sad sometimes. Sadness is a part of life. It is the appropriate response to the sad things that happen in life. "Normal" sadness lasts for a short time, and then goes away without leaving long-lasting effects. Depression is a change in mood that persists over time. It doesn't go away on its own. It interferes with a person's ability to enjoy life, even when good things are happening. It drains all your energy and stops you from taking part in activities you used to do easily. It makes everything seem pointless. Depression causes lasting changes in thinking, relationships, and way of life.



**"People think depression is sadness. People think depression is crying. People think depression is dressing in black. But people are wrong. Depression is the constant feeling of being numb. Being numb to emotions, being numb to life. You wake up in the morning just to go to bed again."**

- Larry Walthour

*Suffering in Silence*

## WHAT DEPRESSION IS LIKE:

- Irritable, agitated, easily annoyed or numb
- Sad, crying easily and difficult to stop
- Overly self-critical
- Constantly bored and unable to find anything enjoyable to do.
- Low energy and no motivation to do anything
- Overly sensitive to criticism, rejection or failure
- Sulking, withdrawing from social situations, not wanting to spend time with friends
- Whining and complaining - focusing on what's wrong and inability to see what's right in situations
- Sleep problems including difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, waking up during the night and having difficulty getting back to sleep, or sleeping all the time
- Nightmares or dreams that are disturbing or distressing
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Physical complaints such as headaches or stomachaches
- Changes in eating habits - eating too much or not at all
- Being very difficult to please
- Getting into fights or trouble at school
- Not wanting to go to school and/or not wanting to participate in other activities



## CRISIS HELP

Sometimes depression can be so strong and overwhelming that it feels like it will never get better and life is no longer worth living. If you or someone you know is considering suicide, help is available. It can get better. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-TALK (8255), the Crisis Center 330-452-6000 or send a text to 741 741.

## WHAT HELPS WITH DEPRESSION:



You are not alone. Lots of people, including people your age, struggle with depression.



**Talk** - Tell someone you trust about your depression and how it is affecting you.



**Express** - It can be hard to put feelings into words. There are lots of ways to express yourself - art, music, dance, photography, etc.



**Gratitude** - Start a gratitude journal. Every day identify 3 things to be grateful for, 3 things that were achieved or 3 good things that happened. On days when it is hard to think of anything good look back through past entries.



**Self-compassion** - We are often our own worst bullies. Remember you don't have to be perfect. What would you say to a friend who is thinking and feeling the way you do?



**Patience** - Be supportive, understanding, encouraging and patient with yourself.



**Plan** - Plan something enjoyable for every day. Plan something to look forward to in the near future and in the longer term. Put reminders in your phone or post them where you'll see them.



**Routine** - Get out of bed and get dressed every day. Set regular bed and wake times. Eat regular meals. Plan tasks to do to fill your day.



**Get active** - Exercise, dance, do a craft, go for a walk, actively engage with life.



**Live Your Life** - Do not avoid doing the things you need to do. The longer you avoid them, the harder it will be get started.

## 3 TYPES OF THOUGHTS THAT SUSTAIN DEPRESSION

- **Negative view of self** - I'm not good enough, I am a bad person, I never get anything right, nobody likes me.
- **Negative view of the world and others** - The world is a cold, cruel place and people are awful and uncaring.
- **Negative expectations for the future** - My life is miserable and it's not going to get any better.

**"There is hope even when your brain says there isn't." - John Green**

## ABOUT PARENTS . . .

It may seem like there is no way your parents will understand or be able to help, especially if they're always nagging you about your behavior. The truth is, parents hate to see their kids hurting. They may feel frustrated because they don't understand what is going on with you or know how to help. Many parents don't know enough about depression to recognize it in their own kids, so it may be up to you to help educate them. Letting your parents know that you are feeling depressed will probably motivate them to get you the help you need.



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