

How to Help Hurting Teenagers

A Guide to Teen Depression and Suicide

This handout includes information regarding the different types of depression experienced by teenagers and the warning signs typically displayed by a depressed teen. It also explains the warning signs that are present when a teen is suicidal, as well as gives practical advice for those caring for teens and helpful emergency contact information for situations of this nature.

Types of Depression

1) Circumstantial Depression

- Circumstances have gone wrong in your life causing you to be depressed
- Should last about 2 weeks, but no longer than 6 weeks
- Will last longer if:
 - The circumstances are on-going (i.e. being bullied)
 - The circumstance is traumatic (i.e. abuse)

2) Clinical Depression

- A chemical imbalance in the brain
 - Can occur at any time during adolescence
- If you have been depressed for more than a few weeks without ongoing circumstances, you may have clinical depression
- Visit a doctor. This is an easy way to get info. Usually, they will just talk with you.

3) Drug & Alcohol Related Depression

- A chemical imbalance brought on by the circumstance of dumping depressants into your body
 - Alcohol & marijuana are depressants
 - Other drugs, such as cocaine, cause depression during the come-down
 - Prescription drugs (including birth control) can cause depression as a side-effect

Warning Signs of Depression in Teens

1. Change in eating habits (weight loss/gain)
2. Change in sleeping habits (sleeping too much or can't sleep enough)
3. Poor performance in school (hard time concentrating)
4. Constantly feel irritable, sad, or angry
5. Loss of interest in friends and favorite activities
6. Excessive fatigue, lack of energy
7. Increased drug & alcohol use
8. Feelings of worthlessness or self-hatred
9. Feel helpless and hopeless
10. Verbalizing or fascination with death & dying
11. Giving away personal or private possessions
12. Excessive risk taking



Moving towards
suicidal thoughts

Suicide is the major life-threatening complication of depression. 2/3 of people who complete suicide are depressed at the time of their deaths. It is important that we learn how to spot the warning signs of depression, as well as identify the warning signs of suicide.

Recognizing the Warning Signs of Suicide – IS PATH WARM?

Ideation (talking or writing about death, dying or suicide)

Substance Abuse

Purposelessness

Anxiety

Trapped

Hopelessness

Withdrawal (from friends, family and society)

Anger

Recklessness

Mood Change

Practical Advice for Parents and Others Who Care for Teens

- **BE INVOLVED IN YOUR KID'S LIFE!** Be available and show interest in the issues affecting your child. Some things might seem small to us as "old, wise adults" but it can mean the world to a kid.
- **LISTEN!** Try to create an atmosphere where a kid can talk about what is going on. Notice how it is important that you are *first* involved in the kid's life. Encourage and allow the expression of feelings. The important thing is that they share what is going on, not that you unload a bunch of answers or give them a solution to fix everything.
- **IF SUICIDE IS SUSPECTED, TALK ABOUT IT!** It is a myth that talking about suicide will put the thought in someone's head. If anything, it is a relief to someone who has been carrying the thought around yet has been unable to talk about it. Studies show that talking about it actually lowers the suicide rate.
- **VALIDATE FEELINGS.** Take their emotions seriously and acknowledge what they are feeling, even if it appears silly to you. Don't minimize their feelings.

Where to Go for More Help

Mental Health Services

Palmer Drug Abuse Program	979-739-4253
STAR Program	979-260-7336
Grimes St. Joseph Health Center – Psychiatric Services	936-825-6585
MHMR	979-361-9815
National Hopeline Network (Hotline)	1-800-SUICIDE

Helpful Websites

National Association of Mental Health www.nimh.nih.gov
American Association of Suicidology www.suicidology.org
Health Talk Online www.healthtalkonline.org
Help Guide http://www.helpguide.org/mental/depression_teen.html