



How to help a teen with depression

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Dispelling the myths about teen moods

- The majority of adolescents go through at least one significant period of depression.



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Dispelling the myths about teen moods

- The majority of adolescents **DO NOT** go through at least one significant period of depression.
- **HOWEVER**, about 1 in 10 will have an episode of clinical depression while in high school.



What are normal mood swings in teens?

- Happy or sad moods that are not persistent – lasting days to weeks
- Mood swings precipitated by environment
- No drastic changes in behaviour associated with moods:
 - School performance
 - Friendships
 - Involvement in extracurricular activities
 - Irritability/temper outbursts





Signs and Symptoms of Depression

- Sadness
- Irritability
- Low energy/Fatigue
- Low motivation/interest
- Poor concentration
- Sleep disturbance
- Change in appetite
- Thoughts of death



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Signs and Symptoms of Depression

- Sadness
 - Persistent sadness with or without crying
 - Not related to recent stressors such as a breakup
 - Think about: Bullying, Problems with peers, Learning issues, Eating disorder
- Irritability
 - Grumpy with everyone
 - Cannot control
 - Think about: Poor sleep, Poor diet, Family history



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Signs and Symptoms of Depression

- Low energy/Fatigue
 - Not due to lack of sleep
 - Other medical causes ruled out
 - Think about: Nutrition/Exercise, Worries/Anxiety
- Low motivation
 - Change in interest
 - Not peer related
 - Ask about: Bullying, Marijuana/Drug use, Learning issues



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Signs and Symptoms of Depression

- Sleep disturbance
 - More than shifted cycle
 - Persistent problem
 - Ask about: Worries/Anxiety, Alcohol use, Sleep disorder
- Thoughts of death
 - Cutting/burning also common
 - Ambivalence very common
 - Think about: Friends, Role models, Family history




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Dispelling the myths about teen moods

- Female adolescents are 2-3 times more likely than males to experience depression.




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Dispelling the myths about teen moods

- Female adolescents are 2-3 times more likely than males to experience depression once they are in adolescence.
- Girls are also 2 to 3 times more likely to have thoughts of suicide or to attempt suicide.
- However, boys are more likely to commit suicide.




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Dispelling the myths about teen moods

- Depression is a serious, debilitating health condition.




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Dispelling the myths about teen moods

- Depression **IS** a serious, debilitating health condition.
- Depression is one of the leading causes of disability worldwide.
- 50% of teens who commit suicide had depression.




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Dispelling the myths about teen moods

- Depression related problems with school functioning (poor attendance, poor work completion) can be effectively overcome by stricter discipline and appropriate consequences




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Dispelling the myths about teen moods

- Depression related problems with school functioning (poor attendance, poor work completion) **CANNOT** be effectively overcome by stricter discipline and appropriate consequences.
- In fact, it may worsen the illness and slow recovery.




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Dispelling the myths about teen moods

- Depression will usually lift spontaneously in 2-3 months.




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Dispelling the myths about teen moods

- Depression **WILL NOT** usually lift spontaneously in 2-3 months.
- The illness is persistent and may take up to 2 years to lift spontaneously.
- Depression recurs in 60% of teens
- Teens who are not treated will suffer with the illness for an extended period of time.




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Dispelling the myths about teen moods


- Getting an adolescent to talk about their depression will tend to reinforce their state of mind.



Dispelling the myths about teen moods


- Getting an adolescent to talk about their depression **WILL NOT** reinforce their state of mind.
- In fact, talking is one of the most effective treatments for depression – in most cases, it is as effective as medications.






Dispelling the myths about teen moods

- Asking a depressed adolescent about suicidal feelings should be avoided, as bringing up the subject can increase their risk for attempting suicide.




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Dispelling the myths about teen moods

- Asking a depressed adolescent about suicidal feelings **SHOULD NOT** be avoided, as bringing up the subject **CANNOT** increase their risk for attempting suicide.
- Similar to depression, talking about suicide is often helpful for teens.



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Dispelling the myths about teen moods

- There is good evidence that formal treatment helps depressed adolescents.



Dispelling the myths about teen moods

- There is good evidence that formal treatment helps depressed adolescents.
- Both talk therapy and medications (or the combination of the two) have been found to be effective treatments for depression in teens.




Where to get help?

- School mental health workers
- Family Doctor/Pediatrician
- Local Hospital
- Local Children's Mental Health Centres
- Support groups




What treatments are available?

- Antidepressants
 - Class of medication similar to Prozac
 - Known as the SSRI's
 - Improvement occurs in 3 to 5 weeks after treatment
 - Side effects
 - Sleep disturbance
 - Irritability
 - Low energy/Fatigue
 - Thoughts of death (rare)



What treatments are available?

- Talk Therapy
 - Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)
 - Interpersonal Therapy (IPT)
 - Barriers to therapy
 - Learning issues
 - Time from school/work
 - Motivation



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Where to get help?

- Talk Therapy
 - School mental health workers
 - Doctors (hospital or community)
 - Private therapists (not OHIP covered)
 - Children's mental health centres
- Medications
 - Doctors (hospital or community)
 - Children's mental health centres




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What can teachers do to help?

- Label what you see
- Treat depression like any other medical diagnosis
- Encourage teen to follow through with treatment
- Give accommodations where needed
- Be a supportive adult for your teen




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What can parents do to help?

- Label what you see
- Educate yourself
- Treat depression like any other medical diagnosis
- Be an advocate for your teen
- Encourage teen to follow through with treatment
- Get supports





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Sunnybrook Innovations

- “No Wrong Door” approach
- Working with patients
- Working with families
- Working with schools
- Working with doctors



Sunnybrook Innovations

- School based clinic
- Helping family doctors and pediatricians to manage depression
 - Guidelines for Adolescent Depression in Primary Care
 - Evaluation of new models for delivering depression care





Resources

- GLAD PC
– www.gladpc.org
- Mood Disorders Association of Ontario
– www.mooddisorders.on.ca
- E-Mental Health
– www.ementalhealth.ca

