



HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS INITIATIVE

Toolkit for Parenting Teenagers Tip Sheet #8: Understanding Depression in Teens

Teenage years can be filled with lots of chaos and uncertainty. It isn't always easy to differentiate between normal growing pains and depression. Teenagers face social pressure and life changes daily but depression goes beyond just being sad or moody, it can affect every aspect of a teen's life. Below are some signs for parents to look for and ways they can help:

Signs

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| 1. Sadness or hopelessness | 8. Restlessness or irritability |
| 2. Difficulty concentrating | 9. Feelings of worthlessness |
| 3. Frequent crying | 10. Lack of motivation |
| 4. Withdrawal from friends and family | 11. Lack of energy |
| 5. Loss of interest in activities | 12. Angry outbursts |
| 6. Trouble at school | 13. Unexplained pains |
| 7. Changes in eating and sleeping habits | 14. Thoughts of death or suicide |

Ways to Help

1. **Make physical and mental health a priority.** Think outside of the box and keep your teen be more active. Teens are already known for their unhealthy habits and inactivity can worsen their depression. Set limits on the amount of time they use technology to escape from the world and encourage physical activity such as hiking or bike riding.
2. **Encourage social connection.** Depression tends to withdraw people from their family and friends, but isolation only makes things worse. Set aside time each day to talk to your teen without distractions or multitasking. Encourage them to hang out with their friends or invite friends over.
3. **Know when to seek professional help.** Support and lifestyle changes can help teens combat their issues, but it's not always enough. When depression is severe, don't be afraid to ask for help. Involve your child in the treatment choices and explore your options.
4. **Support.** As your teen goes through this rough patch the best thing that you can do is let them know that they are loved and supported. Try to be understanding and patient, don't judge yourself or compare yourself to other families.