

Teen Depression: Warning Signs

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Everyone teenager feels sad or blue now and then. Sadness, disappointments, and fatigue are normal parts of life. The normal stresses of life can cause teens to feel depressed every once in a while. These would include: a breakup with a boyfriend or girlfriend; argument with a friend, not making the sports team; death of a loved one; doing poorly on a test at school; and/or feeling left out by a group of friends.

All of these examples (and more) could lead to normal feelings of sadness, hurt, rejection, grief, and disappointment. These feelings are usually brief and will go away in time. Depression is more than just feeling sadness, hurt, rejection, grief, and/or disappointment for a brief amount of time. Depression involves sadness, discouragement, and hopelessness or helplessness that lasts for weeks, months, or even longer periods of time. If you are noticing that your teenager is sad most of the time, and it is affecting their grades or attendance at school; their relationship with family and friends; and/or they have been using alcohol, drugs, or sex as a means of trying to "feel better," the answer may be that they are Depressed. Depression affects a teenager's mood, thoughts, physical being, and relationships. Below is a list of symptoms to help you determine whether or not your teen is depressed. When a teen is depressed:

- They feel sad and may cry a lot
- Easily irritated----over-reactive and lose their temper
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities that they usually would enjoy
- Irregular sleep patterns (insomnia, early-morning awakening or oversleeping)
- Changes in eating patterns (look for increased or decreased eating habits)
- Decreased social interactions with family and friends
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Decreased self-esteem or self-confidence
- Use of alcohol or other drugs Adolescence is a very difficult time. If you feel that your teen suffers from depression and they cannot seem to "pull themselves together" and feel better, then professional intervention is necessary.