

Depression

Depression in Children and Adolescents



What is Depression?

- ❖ Depression is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and a loss of interest
- ❖ Depression is not the same as "passing blue"
- ❖ Also called Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) if it affects how one feels, thinks and behaves and can lead to a variety of other emotional and physical problems
- ❖ Depression is not a sign of personal weakness or a condition that can be wished away
- ❖ Without treatment, depression may last for weeks, months or years

What are symptoms of Depression?

Common symptoms of depression in children and adolescents include:

- ❖ Feeling or appearing depressed, sad, tearful, or irritable
- ❖ Not enjoying things as much as they used to
- ❖ Spending less time with friends or in after school activities
- ❖ Changes in appetite and/or weight
- ❖ Sleeping more or less than usual
- ❖ Feeling tired or having less energy
- ❖ Feeling like everything is their fault or they are not good at anything
- ❖ Having more trouble concentrating
- ❖ Caring less about school or not doing as well in school
- ❖ Having thoughts of suicide or wanting to die

Behaviors to watch for in Adolescents

Adolescents may demonstrate some of the following behaviors:

- ❖ Withdrawing or isolation from friends and family
- ❖ Decrease in grades
- ❖ Lack of self-care/hygiene
- ❖ Discontinuing daily activities that were once enjoyed
- ❖ Verbalizing feelings of guilt, helplessness, or worthlessness
- ❖ Presents restless, such as an inability to sit still
- ❖ Changes in mood such as an increase in anger or irritation
- ❖ Use of mood altering substances in an attempt to feel better
- ❖ Lack of future thinking, giving away valued items, talking about suicide or verbalizing that things would be better off without them

Behaviors to watch for in Children

In children, symptoms can make schoolwork and social activities challenging. They may demonstrate behaviors such as:

- ❖ *Crying*
- ❖ *Low energy*
- ❖ *Clinginess*
- ❖ *Defiant behavior*
- ❖ *Vocal outbursts*
- ❖ *Anger/aggression*

Younger children may have difficulty expressing how they feel in words. This can make it harder for them to explain their feelings of sadness.

How does depression affect school performance?

- ❖ Lack of engagement in the classroom
- ❖ Decrease in attendance
- ❖ Poor relationships with peers and teachers
- ❖ Disinterest in pursuing passions and planning for the future
- ❖ Depression impacts the working memory making the ability to retain new information challenging
- ❖ Difficulty completing tasks that require high-motor and cognitive skills
- ❖ Stops completing classwork/homework and stops turning in assignments
- ❖ Feelings of hopelessness or low self-esteem may cause the belief that the student should not bother or that it is impossible to learn new things so they do not even try
- ❖ Depression impacts sleep which in turn impacts the ability to learn

What can you do to help?

- ❖ Learn how to recognize warning signs. Teenagers go through various phases. There's often a lot of mood swings and emotional episodes that comes with adolescence, and it can be hard to know when their behavior is a part of growing up and when it's more serious. The first step towards helping your child battle depression is to learn how to spot it. Become familiar with the warning signs: low self-esteem, withdrawal, lack of interest, hopelessness, academic success deterioration, drastic changes in appetite, lack of energy, fatigue, thoughts of suicide and death. If your child is experiencing one or a combination of these symptoms, they may need professional help.
- ❖ Get professional help. Contact a professional (primary care physician, mental health professional, school counselor, etc.) to determine if your child needs a higher level of support and care.
- ❖ Encourage a healthy lifestyle. Physical and mental health are closely connected. You can gently encourage your child to engage in: a regular exercise regimen, eating healthy meals and having a balanced sleep routine. As an adult, you could model these same healthy lifestyle choices and join in with your child.

What can you do to help? (Continued)

- ❖ Help your child feel connected. Depression can lead to isolation. A lack of interaction and connection can worsen depression symptoms. Some children find it hard to socially interact and make the first move with new friends. Things you can suggest to your child:
 - Inspire your child to join a club at school or attend activities
 - Give them ideas on attending various social events
 - Encourage playdates and sleepovers at your house
 - Organize family gatherings
 - Encourage time with the family pet
- ❖ Provide emotional support. Your child may need emotional support, and you can be their number one person. Emotional support from the family is the building block of further social relationships. This can be done by:
 - Spending quality time with your child
 - Encourage open and honest conversations
 - Listening to what your child has to say
 - Acknowledging their inner struggles

What can you do if this is impacting you or a friend?

- ❖ Go to a trusted adult to talk about what you are feeling, thinking or experiencing
- ❖ Begin journaling your thoughts and feelings
- ❖ Keep a log of when symptoms are occurring and what symptoms you are having as well as the intensity of the symptoms
- ❖ If a friend is struggling with symptoms of depression, you can go to a trusted adult with your friend, for example you can walk your friend to the school counselor's office during your lunch period
- ❖ If your friend is not open to your help but you are worried about your friend, then you should go to an adult that you trust for help
- ❖ There are solutions! Do not try to get through this alone!

Logan Elm resources for additional support

- ❖ *Jennifer Murphy, School Social Worker*
(740) 474-7538 Ext 1413
- ❖ *Grace King, School Counselor at Logan Elm High School*
(740) 474-7503 Ext 1306
- ❖ *Libby Straub, School Counselor at Logan Elm High School*
(740) 474-7503 Ext 1307
- ❖ *Nikole Bunting, School Counselor at McDowell and Washington Elementary*
(740) 474-7538 Ext 1404
- ❖ *Tahnee Grube, School Counselor at Saltcreek Intermediate, Laurelville Elementary and Pickaway Elementary*
(740) 332-4212 Ext 1503

Online resources for additional support

- ❖ <https://adaa.org/living-with-anxiety/ask-and-learn/resources>
- ❖ <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>
- ❖ <https://angstmovie.com/resources-helpful-websites/>
- ❖ <https://www.nami.org/learn-more/fact-sheet-library>
- ❖ <https://www.nami.org/akaresources/factsheets>