

Helping my Child Cope with Depression	Helping my Teenager Cope with Depression
<p><b>Depression Disorders in Children</b>            If your child experiences symptoms of depression they may be less able to engage and may not want to play with others or by themselves. Children experiencing depression may have more anger or outbursts. Depression may also affect sleep, appetite etc.</p>	<p><b>Depression Disorders in Teenagers</b>            If your child experiences symptoms of depression they may be more irritable than normally observed, may experience behavioral problems and may seem to not be enjoying life as they may have at other times. Teens with depression may also appear to be more isolated and experience changes in academic performance.</p>
<p><b>Symptoms of Depression In Children</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prolonged periods of sadness or mood which does not change as circumstances resolve</li> <li>• Shift in sleeping pattern (too little sleep or too much sleep)</li> <li>• Reduced interest in activities that once brought enjoyment</li> <li>• Change in appetite</li> <li>• Physical complaints including stomach and/or headaches. These should always be reviewed with a pediatrician</li> <li>• Verbalize thoughts “I just want to die” or giving possessions away</li> <li>• Low motivation or an absence of pleasure</li> <li>• Thoughts of or attempted suicide</li> </ul> <p>Most children will experience some “up and down” moods. A child with depression will experience a consistently lowered mood with many or all of the symptoms mentioned above.</p>	<p><b>Symptoms of Depression in Teenagers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depressed mood or irritability</li> <li>• Behavior problems</li> <li>• Low self-esteem</li> <li>• Difficulties interacting with others and/or social isolation</li> <li>• Poor appetite or overeating</li> <li>• Trouble sleeping</li> <li>• Lack of energy and motivation</li> <li>• Trouble concentrating</li> <li>• Difficulty making decisions</li> <li>• Change in school performance</li> <li>• Active use of alcohol, marijuana or other substances</li> <li>• Thoughts of or attempted suicide or self-injurious acts such as cutting arms and legs with a sharp object</li> <li>• Acting out in risky behaviors without caring if he or she dies</li> </ul> <p>Most teenagers will have mild mood fluctuations, but a teenager who is depressed, will have a consistently low mood or irritability for at least 14 days and is evident in every part of their lives, including their peers.</p>
<p><b>How can I help at home?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware that young children cannot always verbalize how they are feeling</li> <li>• A child may be feeling sad and is showing his/her sadness through angry outbursts or destructive behavior. Remain calm and focus on active listening.</li> </ul>	<p><b>How can I help at home?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be emotionally available for your depressed teenager and try to be a good listener, without any judgement or opinion</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage your child to connect his/her thoughts to behavior and feelings. Ask for feelings words and what sensation they feel in their body.</li> <li>• Acknowledge good behavior.</li> <li>• Encourage daily exercise, going outside and playing ball or riding a bicycle</li> <li>• Involve your child in daily chores. Acknowledge their good work. Try not to overwhelm them with too many chores they cannot finish.</li> <li>• If your child has any warning signs of depression, ask if they feel like hurting or killing themselves. If your child keeps saying things like “I would be better off dead” ask them what they mean by that statement. Children sometimes do not know the finality of suicide. Always talk to a professional if you think or suspect your child is suicidal.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try not to “fix” the problem and ask them what they feel would be best for them using unconditional support</li> <li>• Give praises</li> <li>• Encourage your teenager to learn new skills, such as baking, crocheting, puzzles and then reinforcing with praise</li> <li>• Encourage positive thoughts and if your teenagers says something negative, have them repeat the same sentence with something positive</li> <li>• Have them journal, color, draw</li> <li>• Help to create study or homework schedules and breakdown assignments in manageable pieces so they do not feel overwhelmed</li> <li>• If you are suspicious your teenager is involved in using illicit substances, and they are lying, coming home late, are defiant, you may have to be creative and use a home drug test, call other parents who they are hanging out with, and/or ask your teenager if they are using illicit substances.</li> <li>• If you suspect or your teenager has warning signs of self-injurious behaviors such as cutting arms and legs with a sharp object, and/or talking about not wanting to live anymore, please call a professional.</li> </ul>
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**Helpful Resources:**

[Coloring Book for Grades 1-3 about depression](#)

[mADAP app](#)

[CBT tools for youths](#)

[Emotional Diary](#)

[Safety planning for suicide ideation](#)

[Mood tools](#)