

Adolescent Depression

Albany Middle School

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What are we seeing?

Moodiness

Sadness

Complicated Grief

Major Depression

BiPolar Disorder

Substance Abuse/Addiction

Trauma

First steps:

- See your pediatrician.
- Rule out medical issues that present as depression.
- Your pediatrician can: do an initial screening for depression; give you referrals to mental health professionals.

Treatment considerations:

- Treat the adolescent first: screen and diagnose.
- Treatment typically consists of talk therapy, with or without medication.
- Working with the whole family can be very helpful, as well: Improve communication; Air differences/problems and work them through with professional guidance; Help the family learn how to be best supportive; Evaluate whether the adolescent depression is a sign of an overarching family issue (concept of Identified Patient, “canary in the coal mine”).

From NIMH website:

What Is Depression?

Depression (major depressive disorder) is a medical illness that can interfere with your ability to handle your daily activities, such as sleeping, eating, or managing your school work. Depression is common but that doesn't mean it isn't serious. Treatment may be needed for someone to feel better. Depression can happen at any age, but often symptoms begin in the teens or early 20s or 30s. It can occur along with other mental disorders, substance abuse, and other health conditions.

Why can't you just 'snap out' of depression?

Well-meaning friends or family members may try to tell someone with depression to "snap out of it," "just be positive," or "you can be happier if you just try harder." But depression is not a sign of weakness or a character flaw. Most people with depression need treatment to get better.

What Are the Signs and Symptoms of Depression?

Sadness is something we all experience. It is a normal reaction to a loss or a setback, but it usually passes with a little time. Depression is different.

If you are wondering if you may have depression, ask yourself these questions:

- Do you constantly feel sad, anxious, or even "empty," like you feel nothing?
- Do you feel hopeless or like everything is going wrong?
- Do you feel like you're worthless or helpless? Do you feel guilty about things?
- Do you feel irritable much of the time?
- Do you find yourself spending more time alone and withdrawing from friends and family?
- Are your grades dropping?
- Have you lost interest or pleasure in activities and hobbies that you used to enjoy?
- Have your eating or sleeping habits changed (eating or sleeping more than usual or less than usual)?
- Do you always feel tired? Like you have less energy than normal or no energy at all?
- Do you feel restless or have trouble sitting still?
- Do you feel like you have trouble concentrating, remembering information, or making decisions?
- Do you have aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or stomach problems without a clear cause?
- Do you ever think about dying or suicide? Have you ever tried to harm yourself?

Elements of Psychotherapy

A variety of different kinds of psychotherapies and interventions have been shown to be effective for specific disorders. Psychotherapists may use one primary approach, or incorporate different elements depending on their training, the condition being treated, and the needs of the person receiving treatment.

Here are examples of the elements that psychotherapies can include:

- Helping a person become aware of ways of thinking that may be automatic but are inaccurate and harmful. (An example might be someone who has a low opinion of his or her own abilities.) The therapist helps the person find ways to question these thoughts, understand how they affect emotions and behavior, and try ways to change self-defeating patterns. This approach is central to cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT).
- Identifying ways to cope with stress.

- Examining in depth a person's interactions with others and offering guidance with social and communication skills, if needed.
- Relaxation and mindfulness techniques.
- Exposure therapy for people with anxiety disorders. In exposure therapy, a person spends brief periods, in a supportive environment, learning to tolerate the distress certain items, ideas, or imagined scenes cause. Over time the fear associated with these things dissipates.
- Tracking emotions and activities and the impact of each on the other.
- Safety planning can include helping a person recognize warning signs, and thinking about coping strategies, such as contacting friends, family, or emergency personnel.
- Supportive counseling to help a person explore troubling issues and provide emotional support.

What else can I do to help manage my depression?

Be patient and know that treatment takes time to work. In the meantime, you can:

- Stay active and exercise, even if it's just going for a walk.
- Try to keep a regular sleep schedule.
- Spend time with friends and family.
- Break down school or work tasks into smaller ones and organize them in order of what needs to get done first. Then, do what you can.

Resources

- <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/teen-depression/index.shtml>
- <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/psychotherapies/index.shtml>
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/complicated-grief/symptoms-causes/syc-20360374>
- <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2017/10/coping-grief>