

Coping With Depression, Teen

Depression is an experience of feeling down, blue, or sad. Depression can affect your thoughts and feelings, relationships, daily activities, and physical health. It is caused by changes in your brain that can be triggered by stress in your life or a serious loss.

Everyone experiences occasional disappointment, sadness, and loss in their lives. When you are feeling down, blue, or sad for at least 2 weeks in a row, it may mean that you have depression. If you receive a diagnosis of depression, your health care provider will tell you which type of depression you have and the possible treatments to help.

How can depression affect me?

Being depressed can make daily activities more difficult. It can negatively affect your daily life, from school and sports performance to work and relationships. When you are depressed, you may:

- Want to be alone.
- Avoid interacting with others.
- Avoid doing the things you usually like to do.
- Notice changes in your sleep habits.
- Find it harder than usual to wake up and go to school or work.
- Feel angry at everyone.
- Feel like you do not have any patience.
- Have trouble concentrating.
- Feel tired all the time.
- Notice changes in your appetite.
- Lose or gain weight without trying.
- Have constant headaches or stomachaches.
- Think about death or attempting suicide often.

What are things I can do to deal with depression?

If you have had symptoms of depression for more than 2 weeks, talk with your parents or an adult you trust, such as a counselor at school or church or a coach. You might be tempted to only tell friends, but you should tell an adult too. The hardest step in dealing with depression is admitting that you are feeling it to someone. The more people who know, the more likely you will be to get some help.

Certain types of counseling can be very helpful in treating depression. A counseling professional can assess what treatments are going to be most helpful for you. These may include:

- Talk therapy.
- Medicines.
- Brain stimulation therapy.

There are a number of other things you can do that can help you cope with depression on a daily basis, including:

- Spending time in nature.
- Spending time with trusted friends who help you feel better.
- Taking time to think about the positive things in your life and to feel grateful for them.
- Exercising, such as playing an active game with some friends or going for a run.

- Spending less time using electronics, especially at night before bed. The screens of TVs, computers, tablets, and phones make your brain think it is time to get up rather than go to bed.
- Avoiding spending too much time spacing out on TV or video games. This might feel good for a while, but it ends up just being a way to avoid the feelings of depression.

What should I do if my depression gets worse?

If you are having trouble managing your depression or if your depression gets worse, talk to your health care provider about making adjustments to your treatment plan.

You should get help immediately if:

- You feel suicidal and are making a plan to commit suicide.
- You are drinking or using drugs to stop the pain from your depression.
- You are cutting yourself or thinking about cutting yourself.
- You are thinking about hurting others and are making a plan to do so.
- You believe the world would be better off without you in it.
- You are isolating yourself completely and not talking with anyone.

If you find yourself in any of these situations, you should do one of the following:

- Immediately tell your parents or best friend.
- Call and go see your health care provider or health professional.
- Call the suicide prevention hotline (1-800-273-8255 in the U.S.).
- Text the crisis line (741741 in the U.S.).

Where can I get support?

It is important to know that although depression is serious, you can find support from a variety of sources. Sources of help may include:

- Suicide prevention, crisis prevention, and depression hotlines.
- School teachers, counselors, coaches, or clergy.
- Parents or other family members.
- Support groups.

You can locate a counselor or support group in your area from one of the following sources:

- Mental Health America: www.mentalhealthamerica.net
- Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA): www.adaa.org
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): www.nami.org

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.