



**Pacific Beach Middle School
Counseling Center**



Teens and Depression

What is Depression?

- Depression is defined as an illness when the feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and despair persist and interfere with a child or adolescent's ability to function.
- There are many changes that go on during the adolescent years which is why it can sometimes be difficult to know when a child's behavior is normal for a teenager or not.
- When teens' moods disrupt their ability to function on a day-to-day basis, it may indicate a serious emotional or mental disorder that needs attention.

Statistics:

- A recent National Institute of Mental Health study says: one in eight children between the ages of 9 and 17 experiences mild to severe depression.
- By the age of 15, teenage girls will suffer depression twice the rate of boys
- About 20 percent of teens will experience depression before adulthood
- Between 10 to 15 percent of teenagers have some symptoms of teen depression at any one time
- As many as 8.3 percent of teens suffer from depression for at least a year at a time, compared to about 5.3 percent of the general population

Signs and Symptoms that May Indicate Depression:

- Change in school performance
- Change in eating or sleeping patterns
- Withdrawal from friends and activities previously enjoyed
- Persistent sadness and hopelessness
- Anger/Rage
- Decreased energy
- Excessive guilt/Anxiety
- Unable to concentrate/Indecisive
- Restlessness
- Poor self-esteem
- Irritable/Angered easily
- Physical aches/pains
- Substance abuse
- Problems with authority
- Suicidal thoughts/actions

Risk Factors:

- Stressful life events
- Loss of a parent to death or divorce, child abuse, unstable care giving, poor social skills, and chronic illness
- Breakup with a significant other can trigger a depression
- Depression can be genetic
- Substance abuse
- Sometimes depression just happens

What should Parents do if they think their teen may be suffering from Depression?

- GET HELP: Depression is real and serious-it needs attention
- Call your physician for a reference or the school counselor or psychologist for assistance and information
- Listen to your child
- Take the problem seriously
- Don't put them down or lessen how they feel: Comments like "it will get better" or "tomorrow is another day" do not help. These comments make the child feel that you are not really listening or taking them seriously.
- Encourage your child to talk to others as well as you: school counselor, teacher, an adult whom your child respects.
- Don't force them to be cheerful, but let them know you care and will be there for them
- Offer help as soon as you feel their behavior is affecting many aspects of their normal routine
- Do not expect your child to be completely open with you, do not take this personal, be patient, and continue to let them know you are there.

Resources:

National Institute of Mental Health: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

About Teen Depression: <http://www.about-teen-depression.com>

Teen Depression: <http://www.teendepression.org>

Guide for Parents / Teachers: http://www.helpguide.org/mental/depression_teen.htm

Tips for Teens: http://www.helpguide.org/mental/depression_teen_teenagers.htm

Depression and Bipolar support Alliance: 1-800-826-3632

This can help find a support group in your area.

Books:

Helping Your Teenager Beat Depression by Katharina Manassis and Anne Marie Levac.
Understanding Teenage Depression: A Guide to Diagnosis, Treatment, and Management
 by Maureen Empfield and Nick Bakalar