

DEPRESSION INFORMATION FOR TEENS AND PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

First Approach Skills Training for Depression (FAST-D)

QUICK SUMMARY

What is depression?

Depression is when normal feelings like being sad, down, grumpy or irritable are very intense, go on too long, and get in the way of normal life. About 1 in 5 teens have serious depression at some point. Here are the common signs:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Easily irritated | <input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping problems | <input type="checkbox"/> Problems thinking clearly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sad, down, or hopeless | <input type="checkbox"/> Changes in how fast you move or speak | <input type="checkbox"/> Trouble making decisions or concentrating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less interest or enjoyment in things you used to enjoy | <input type="checkbox"/> Low energy/tiredness | <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking about death or hurting yourself |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appetite or weight change | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling worthless or guilty | |

What causes depression?

Many things can cause depression: losses, disappointments, stressful or traumatic events, social or family problems, medical problems, loneliness, changes in the family such as divorce, transitions like moving to a new school, or anxiety problems. Sometimes depression seems to come out of the blue. Depression can also run in families.

How can depression make you stuck?

Depression makes it hard to do things that might help you feel better. And problems can start to pile up, making you feel overwhelmed.

THINGS TEENS CAN DO

What can teens do to feel better?

Even small changes can make a big difference. Are there are 1 or 2 things below you could try this week? Consider talking with a family member, friend or counselor for support.

Sleep better: Aim for 8-10 hours. Avoid naps and caffeine, stick to regular sleep and wake times, no screens the hour before bed, keep phones out of the bedroom at night, and try to get outside during the day. These changes alone can have a huge impact.

Exercise: Even a little daily exercise can boost mood and help with sleep and energy.

Connect: Find ways to be social. Reconnect with old friends or try make new ones. Try to have fun with relatives.

Have fun: Even if you don't feel like it, set a time for activities you would normally enjoy.

Solve problems: Are you stressed by problems in your life? Talk with a trusted person about what is going on, or write in a journal, and figure out a plan that might help.

Move toward goals: Figure out a small step you can take toward a goal you care about.

Deal with anxiety: Lots of anxiety (feeling too worried or nervous) can lead to depression. Ask your primary care provider or counselor about how to overcome anxiety problems.

Deal with trauma: Traumatic events (like abuse or violence) can cause depression. Consider getting support from a counselor or talking to someone you trust about what happened.

Avoid alcohol or drugs: These make depression worse. Look for other ways to cope.

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WAYS YOU CAN HELP YOUR TEEN

Try these strategies to help your teen

Support sleep: Encourage healthy sleep habits (see page 1). Consider having a device curfew so screens and technology do not interfere with sleep. Having devices like cell phones charge overnight where you can monitor them, and setting up parental controls (check with your cell carrier) can sometimes help.

Support socializing and getting active: If there are ways you can help your teen get out of the house, get physical activity, or connect with healthy peers, do it! If your teen is depressed, try to avoid using punishments like grounding them at home.

Spend quality time: Spend one-on-one time with your teen at least a few times each week. Do something they like and follow their lead. Avoid lectures or criticism. Ask them about things they are into and show interest. Consider asking them to teach you about something they know more about (like their favorite music or hobby).

Hold your criticism: It is easy to find things to criticize when your teen is depressed. Often they are avoiding important tasks (like schoolwork or chores) and they might be grumpy and withdrawn. If you do have to give your teen negative feedback, try not to criticize their personality (don't call them lazy or selfish) but instead focus on the behaviors you don't like.

Comment on positive steps: Try to find examples of small positive steps or healthy choices and comment on those. Look for one or two each day. Keep it totally positive! (Don't add on comments like "I wish you would do that more often.")

Be a good listener: Ask your teen about their life and their interests. When they do open up, don't punish their openness by giving lectures, telling them what to do, or criticizing. Don't give advice unless they want it. Tell them you understand what they are feeling even if you don't totally agree.

Deal with screen problems: If your teen is using screens or technology in an unhealthy way, and it is getting in the way of their relationships or responsibilities, consider putting limits on it. Parental control apps (like Circle, or cell carrier parental controls) can help you block off times of the day for school, homework, and sleep. Parental controls can also turn devices off until teens have met daily responsibilities.

Tell them you believe in them: Let your teen know they are strong and you know they can get through this hard time.

Safety: *If you have a depressed teen in your house, remove any guns from the home. If you think your teen might try to hurt themselves, seek professional support right away.*

Medication: *Some medications have been found to help with teen depression, especially when combined with effective therapy. Your primary care provider can tell you more.*