



REMEMBER

- Young people experiencing depression often feel numb and fatigued. They have a negative view of themselves and their value to the world. They are trapped in their present pain and find it difficult to remember any good from the past or anticipate any joy in the future.
- Depression is complicated and relief often comes from an intentional combination of interventions. This is not the same as throwing out lists of things the person should try, which is often a response to our own feelings of helplessness.
- Treatment brings relief to 80% of youth, but young people usually don't know how to seek help on their own and are often unaware that what they are experiencing is depression.
- Depression isn't about the level of happiness - it's about the loss of hope. Remind the teen of who they are in the eyes of God and that He is with them always - even in the darkness of depression (Ps 139).



RECOGNIZE

- 10% of youth 15-24 are diagnosed with depression - higher than all other age groups - but only half of those access treatment. According to the US Surgeon General, symptoms of depression have doubled during the pandemic with up to 25% of young people now affected.
- Many teens experience depressive feelings as they are learning to navigate life and manage the changes of adolescence. But if feelings of hopelessness/worthlessness and a chronically negative mood persist beyond 2 weeks and spread over multiple areas of life, causing them to step away from the things that formerly brought joy, this may be more than adolescent blues.
- Warning signs are varied but often include apathy, avoidance, shame, heightened irritability, isolation, deep sadness or fatigue. You may also see things like deep despair, impaired memory, recurring complaints of physical pains (like headaches/stomach-aches) and difficulty thinking clearly/making decisions.
- Symptoms of depression will likely not disappear on their own and may put the teen at risk of alcohol/drug abuse, self-harm or suicide if left unacknowledged.



RESPOND

- **Know your role:** Resist the urge to “talk the person out of” feeling down. Focus on offering your compassionate presence, creating a network of helpful support and building bridges between the teen and the services that are available.
- **Make space to listen:** A depressed teen feels incredibly separated from the rest of the world and may have a lot of words or very few. Put time aside to get to understand their experience of depression...or to just sit in silence with them.
- **Acknowledge feelings:** Be sure the teen knows that sad feelings are part of being human. Help them discover and practice helpful ways of coping. Remember, if dark feelings persist and become mentally painful, creating destructive “truth” about their worth or future, help them see a doctor for assessment and support.
- **Help them create and follow rhythms in their life:** Regular bedtime, intentional gratitude, engaging with community, healthy eating, and daily exercise are essential for beginning to heal. Unfortunately, the lack of motivation that comes with depression makes this difficult. Ask their family/support network to join you in practicing healthy rhythms alongside them.
- **Provide hope-filled distractions:** Don't allow depression to be the centre of every conversation. Acknowledge how hard this is for them, and then invite them into “normal”, interesting, lighthearted places with you. Watch for and remind them of who they are apart from the depression.
- **Develop a living plan:** The lack of clear thinking in depression can lead a teen to consider suicide. Develop a list with the teen of people they can call/ways to respond when the hopelessness overwhelms. Include Kids Help Phone 24-hour crisis line (text “Connect” to 686868).
- **Know your boundaries:** Someone who feels they are drowning will naturally hold on tightly to help. Let them know how often you are able to initiate contact with them and when you will respond to messages and then stick to your plan - unless they have expressed an intent to harm themselves.



DEPRESSION

lifeteams
resources



RESOURCES

fulleryouthinstitute.org - Search “Depression” to discover a faith-based article on Naming and navigating depression in teens.

www.mayoclinic.org - Search “Teen Depression” for signs and guidance on the difference between adolescent moods and depression that requires greater intervention.

<https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/inside-head-depressed-person-0110134> - An excellent description of what is going on inside the mind of someone struggling with depression.