

TEEN TURNING POINTS



Out of the blue

The teenage years are thought to be filled with fun, social activities and happiness. However, teenager's experience "down" times when they're feeling discouraged. Everyone feels disappointed or fed up at times, but when those feelings turn to depression, it's more serious.

Depression is very common. It is a serious health disorder that can change behavior, physical health, academic performance and the ability to handle everyday decisions and pressures.

Causes of depression vary

The cause of depression seems to be linked to biological and emotional factors. If someone has had a negative experience, low self-esteem or a bleak outlook, they are more likely to become depressed. If a young person has pressure on him or her to follow in the footsteps of an older sibling or parent, he or she may experience some depression in trying to live up to those expectations.

Many of the changes and feelings experienced during adolescence can be overwhelming at times. Peer pressure, the transition to independence, and new feelings are stressful and may lead to depression.

Symptoms of depression

Symptoms associated with depression include prolonged periods of sadness, hopelessness, guilt or worthlessness. A severely depressed person may appear unable to make normal decisions, remember things or concentrate. Talk of death or suicide is also a warning sign and should be immediately reported to a trusted, responsible adult.

Depression can be treated

Fortunately depression can be treated. Teenagers must learn about depression, so they

can recognize the signs and seek help for them-selves or loved ones. Someone experiencing any of the symptoms of depression should be encouraged to seek help from a teacher, parent or clergy. You can talk to a trusted adult for them. You will not be betraying your friend. You may be saving his or her life.

How to cope with depression

If you are suffering from depression, here are some tips that may help you:

- Do something constructive such as building something, exercise or dancing. This will take your mind off whatever is making you feel down.
- Eat a well-balanced diet. Lack of sufficient vitamins and nutrients can make the depression even worse.
- Resist the temptation to drown your sorrows. Drugs and alcohol only mask your problems temporarily. They also dramatically increase depression.
- Talk it over with someone.
- Give yourself encouragement. Remind yourself that many other people have experienced depression and came out of it, just as you will.

If you need more help

Crisis Services at (810) 257-3740 or toll free at (877) 346-3648, where a counselor is available 24 hours a day. For non-emergency services, call (810) 257-3742. TTY users call (810) 232-6310. © www.genhs.org



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