

When Depression Is Severe

People who are extremely depressed and who may be thinking about hurting themselves or about suicide need help as soon as possible. When depression is this severe, it is a very real medical emergency and an adult must be notified. If you are at home, tell your parent(s), a trusted adult, or call **(559) 627-1490 or 1-800-273-TALK**. If you are at school, talk to your teacher, learning director, nurse, or school psychologist. They will get help for you. In the meantime, the following suggestions can help you get through the day.

- ❖ **There is always another solution, even if you can't see it right now.** Kids sometimes feel there is no other way out. Remember that no matter how horrible you feel, these emotions will pass.
- ❖ **Having thoughts of wanting to hurt yourself does not make you a bad person.** Depression can make you think and feel things that are out of character.
- ❖ **If your feelings are uncontrollable, tell yourself to wait 24 hours before you take any action.** During this 24 hour period, try to talk to someone – anyone – as long as they are not another suicidal or depressed person. Call a hotline or talk to a friend.
- ❖ **If you're afraid you can't control yourself, make sure you are never alone.** Even if you can't verbalize your feelings, just stay in public places, hang out with friends or family members, or go to a movie – anything to keep from being by yourself and in danger.
- ❖ **Above all, do not do anything that could result in permanent damage or death to yourself or others.**

Remember, suicide is a “permanent solution to a temporary problem.” Help is available. All you need to do is take that first step and reach out.

What is the difference between being Sad and Depressed?

Everybody has their ups and downs. One can feel sad following an argument, getting a bad grade on a test, a friend moving out of town, etc. It is usually brief and goes away with a little time and care.

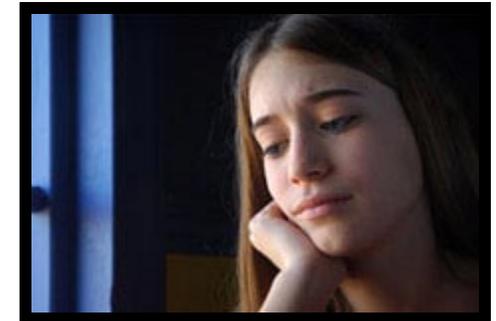
Depression is a strong mood involving sadness, despair, or hopelessness that lasts for weeks, months, or even longer.



Created by: Joy Bratton
School Psychologist
Visalia Unified School District
08/2008

Bibliography:
<http://helpguide.org>
<http://kidshealth.org>
<http://www.scienceclarified.com>

Are you *Sad*?



Teenage years can be tough, and it's perfectly normal to feel sad or irritable every now and then. But if these feelings don't go away or become so intense that you feel you can't handle them, you may have depression. You do not have to feel this way. You have more power over your feelings than you think.

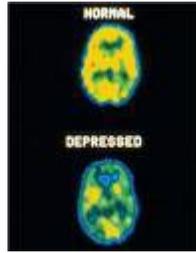
What is Depression?

It is suspected that depression affects 1 in 8 teenagers and tends to affect girls more than guys. There is no single cause for depression but the following factors are known to contribute to depression.

Genetics	Research shows that depression runs in families and some people inherit genes that make it more likely for them to get depressed.
Life Events	Life events such as the death of a loved one, parent divorce, or moving, can go beyond the normal sadness and sometimes lead to depression.
Environment	For some teens, a negative, stressful, or unhappy family atmosphere can affect their self-esteem and lead to depression.
Substance Abuse	Alcohol and some drugs are known to have depressant effects and can cause changes in the brain that affect one's mood.
Medical	Some medical conditions can cause a depressed mood in people. Hormonal changes and physical illness can also affect mood.

What does the brain have to do with Depression?

Mood is controlled by chemicals called neurotransmitters. When people become stressed, neurotransmitters run low, which can lead to depression.



Brain scan images of a person with depression and a person without depression. There is less activity with the depressed person

Signs of being depressed

A person who could be depressed might show some of the following symptoms:

- Depressed mood or sadness most of the time (for what may seem like no reason).
- Lack of energy and feeling tired all the time.
- Inability to enjoy things that used to bring pleasure.
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Irritability, anger, or anxiety
- Inability to concentrate
- Significant weight loss or gain
- Significant change in sleep patterns
- Feelings of guilt or worthlessness
- Aches and pains (with no known medical reason)
- Not caring about anything in the present or future
- Feelings of not wanting to be alive

What can I do to start feeling better?

Feelings of sadness and depression are treatable. Here are some things that can help you feel better.

- **Exercise.** Doing activities like riding a bike, yoga, and dance, can make yourself feel better no matter how tired you feel. Exercising releases endorphins in your body which makes you feel instantly happier.
- **Try not to isolate yourself.** Isolating yourself only makes depression worse.

Make it a point to stay social, even if it's the last thing you want to do. Spend time with friends that are upbeat and make you feel good about yourself. Avoid hanging out with those who abuse drugs and alcohol, get you in trouble, or make you feel insecure.

- **Express your feelings through writing.** Journaling, poetry, and art are all ways you can get your feelings out rather it is private or something you may share with others.
- **Treat your body well.** Eat healthy and eat well to help your body function at its best. Your body needs vitamins and minerals such as iron and B-vitamins. Feed your mind with fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- **Talk it out.** It can be very helpful to talk to someone about your feeling. You may feel some relief being able to share your feelings. Talk to your friends and parent(s). If you feel unable to talk to them, talk to a trusted adult. Simply saying, "I've been feeling really down lately and I think I'm depressed," can be a good way to begin the discussion.
- **Consider getting help from a professional.** Just like when we need to go to a mechanic to get our car fixed, or to a doctor when we are sick, we also at times need help with our emotions. Speaking to a professional therapist can be of great help.
- **Consider talking to your doctor.** Sometimes our feelings may need medical attention. In the case of depression, your doctor may want to evaluate you for medical conditions that may be affecting your mood and/or give you advice on possible treatments.

