

Teenage Depression: Some Basic Facts



- A person can smile and be very personable and likeable with depression. "Smiling depression" tricky to detect, but clues will be there. Some hide their depression very well.
- The "bad" or "mad" teen may really be the sad teen.
- "I don't care." Translated, "Please help me."
- Depression may only present itself as a physical ailment such as chronic headaches, stomachaches, backaches, or joint pain.
- A person may feel he can't do anything right and may apologize profusely. Example, "I'm sorry I cause so much trouble all the time. I can't do anything right." (Unwarranted guilt feelings)
- Keep in mind that a student's grades may not drop, even though she may be suffering from depression.
- Young people aren't able to verbalize or express their feelings as well as adults. They may "hint". You have to use your sixth sense, trust your instincts and ask specific questions. Read between the lines. The words they choose won't accurately convey their sense of urgency and despair.
- They may focus on one particular event that recently occurred. It will seem overwhelming to them; they won't be able to let it go. They have an inability to see the event for what it's worth - more than likely, a common every day occurrence that most people would be able to work through and then let pass
- Eating disorders' roots many times lie in depression. They are, once again, under that umbrella of chemical imbalance. If someone is anorexic or bulimic, without realizing it, this may be their way of trying to make themselves feel better.
- A person suffering from depression wants and needs to be told a specific plan of action - steps that will be taken to get him on the road to recovery. A person with cancer has the details of their treatment plan explained to them - depression shouldn't be any different. The objective is to make sure hope is not lost or that hope is restored. If a person with any disease loses hope, he/she is in serious danger.
- Do not minimize a person's problems, however trivial they may seem. Example: "You have everything to live for. I can't believe you're depressed."
- Do not tell them how they should feel. Such as, "You don't have anything to be depressed about. You hang in there, things will get better." Their problems are very real to them. They need to have their feelings validated.
- Young people can detect insincerity. If detected, it will cause them more pain. If you feel you are unable to help them, find someone who can.
- Teens are known for their reluctance to seek help and stick with it. They must have support.
- If you are trying to change a person's mind, do not say to someone who is contemplating suicide, "Think what your parents will go through." Statements such as this might be interpreted as; "She doesn't care about me, only about what other people think." It might be better to say, "I care about you and I want you to live. I will help you get the help you need."