DEPRESSION IN TEENAGERS

CLARK COUNTY TEENTALK

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A LETTER
FROM A FRIEND

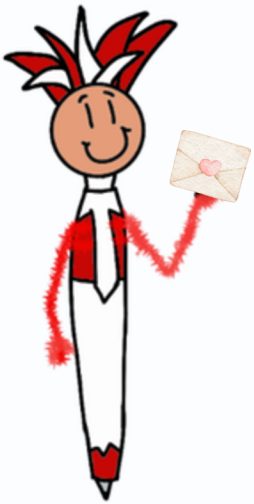
Dear Friend,
I just wanted to say, I've been there too. It can make simple things like getting out of bed or brushing your teeth feel impossible. It sucks not being able to enjoy the things you used to. Despite all this, it can get better.

For me, it felt like I was stuck in a fog. I stopped texting people back, skipped meals, and just kind of existed. I didn't think anyone would understand, and honestly, I didn't even know how to explain it. But one day, I told a friend. And it helped. You can start small. Just choose one thing a day to do (like reading this letter :3)

I want you to know this: You don't have to do this alone . Talk to someone. A friend, a teacher, a counselor, anyone you trust. Even if you don't know what to say, just start with "I'm not okay." That's enough.

Also, don't beat yourself up for not being "productive" or "happy." Some days you'll feel okay, and some days you won't. That's normal. Just keep showing up. Even if it's just brushing your teeth or stepping outside for five minutes.

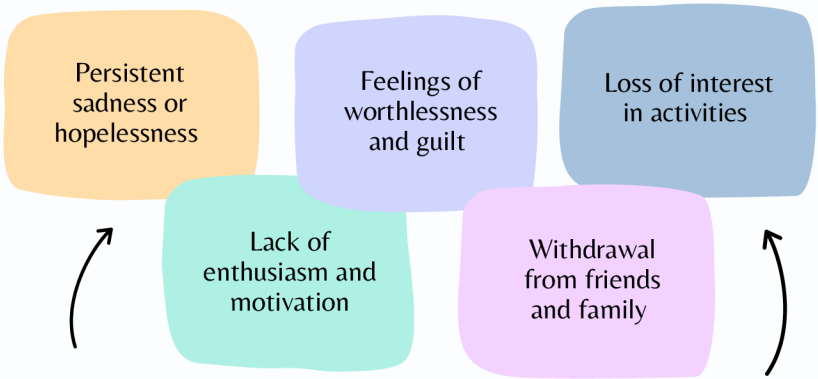
You are going through something hard and you are brave to keep showing up.
From someone who's been there. 💙



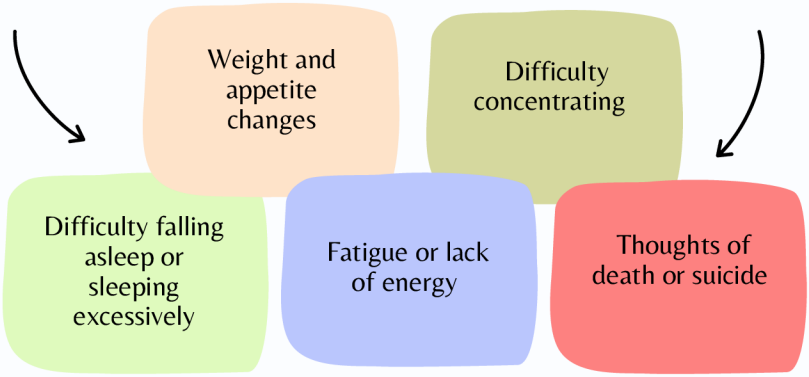
Teen Talk

What is depression?

Depression is when your mind feels weighed down, making it hard to focus, care, or feel motivated. You might want to be alone more or feel like you're not yourself. It's a real mental health condition, not a weakness.



SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION IN TEENAGERS



EMOTIONAL WELLBEING SCALE

A way to check in with yourself

If you or anyone using this scale ever feels like they don't want to live, it's important to reach out to a trusted adult, friend, or a mental-health professional. You don't have to handle that alone.

Feeling Overwhelmed and Hopeless

- Everything feels extremely heavy or pointless.
- Hard to imagine things getting better.

Deeply Struggling

- Very low mood most of the time. Feeling exhausted.
- Hard to get through the day or take care of basic tasks.

Having a Hard Time

- Mood is low and motivation is limited.
- Feeling down, stressed, or discouraged often.

Not Great, but Managing

- Mood is up and down.
- Feeling "off," tired, or unmotivated, but still moving forward.

Doing Okay

- Able to handle responsibilities and daily life.
- Some positive moments, even if things aren't perfect.

Feeling Good

- Mood is generally positive.
- Able to enjoy activities, connect with others, and look ahead.

Feeling Strong and Balanced

- Emotionally steady and hopeful about the future.
- Motivated, engaged, and able to handle challenges.

Problems at school:
Depression can cause low energy and concentration difficulties. At school, this may lead to poor attendance, a drop in grades, or frustration with schoolwork in a formerly good student.

Suicide:
If you're feeling really depressed, you might find yourself thinking or talking about suicide. Those thoughts are serious, and you deserve support. Suicidal thoughts or behaviors should always be taken very seriously.

Low self-esteem:
Depression can trigger and intensify feelings of ugliness, shame, failure, and unworthiness.

Substance abuse:
Alcohol or drugs might seem like a way to handle difficult emotions. But in the long run, substance use usually makes things harder.

Self-injury:
Self-injury is sometimes used as a coping strategy when emotions feel too big.
Big changes in eating can be a sign something's wrong. Anorexia, bulimia, binge eating, and yo-yo dieting are often signs of unrecognized depression.

When depression goes untreated

it can start to affect different parts of your life in ways that feel really heavy or confusing.

TIPS FOR TALKING TO A DEPRESSED FRIEND

START THE CONVERSATION

Starting a conversation about depression can be stressful, but you can say something simple: "You seem like you are really down, and not yourself. I really want to help you. Is there anything I can do?"

LISTEN WITHOUT JUDGEMENT

Your friend probably just needs someone to listen and be supportive. By listening and responding in a non-judgmental and reassuring manner, you are helping in a major way.

ENCOURAGE SEEKING HELP

Urge your friend to talk to a parent, teacher, or counselor. It might be scary for your friend to admit to an adult that there is a problem. Having you there might help, so offer to go along for support. Follow up with them after to see how the conversation went.

CHECK IN

Depression can make people act in ways that seem confusing, distant, or even hurtful. Try to remember that your friend is struggling and it isn't about you. Being patient, checking in, and staying connected can make a real difference while they get the help they need.

As a friend, you deserve support too. It's okay to lean on other friends, family, or trusted adults when things feel heavy. Your feelings matter, and setting boundaries is healthy. You can care about your friend and still protect your own well-being.

WARNING SIGNS OF A TEEN IN CRISIS

Talking or joking about committing suicide.

Saying things like, “I’d be better off dead,” “I wish I could disappear forever,” or “There’s no way out.”

Speaking positively about death or romanticizing dying (“If I died, people might love me more”).

Writing stories and poems about death, dying, or suicide.

Seeking out weapons, pills, or other ways to kill themselves.

Engaging in reckless behavior or having a lot of accidents resulting in injury.

Giving away prized possessions.

Saying goodbye to friends and family as if for good.

DEALING
WITH SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

THERE IS ALWAYS ANOTHER SOLUTION

Many kids who have attempted suicide say they felt there was no other solution to their problems. At the time, they could not see another way out, but in truth, they didn't really want to die. Remember that no matter how horribly you feel, these emotions will pass.

YOU ARE NOT A BAD PERSON

Depression can make you think and feel things that are out of character. No one should judge you for these feelings if you are brave enough to talk about them.

WAIT 24 HOURS

Give yourself a day to cool off and think more clearly. Use that time to reach out to someone who cares about you like a friend, a trusted adult, or a hotline. Talking to someone can really help.

STAY AROUND OTHERS

When your thoughts feel heavy or scary, being near people can help you feel a bit safer. You don't have to talk about what's going on being in a public place can make the moment easier to get through. Reaching out for company is a way of keeping yourself safe while you figure out what you need next.

WAYS TO CARE FOR YOURSELF

1. Ask for help if you're stressed

Stress and worry can take a big toll, even leading to depression. Talk to a teacher or school counselor if exams or classes seem overwhelming. If you are dealing with a health concern (such as pregnancy or a drug problem) and can't talk to your parents, go to a clinic or doctor. They can help and guide you through it. For problems with friends, relationships, or family, speak to an adult you trust. Your school counselor or a therapist can help you sort things out. Or connect with us-we are local teens who might be navigating the same things as you.

Asking for help can look like this:

"I've been feeling really down lately and I don't know why. Can you help me figure out what to do?"

"Things at home have been really stressful. Could I talk to you about it?"

"My friend group is falling apart, and I don't know how to handle it. Can you help me sort it out?"

"I think I might have a health issue and I'm scared. Could a doctor check it out and explain what's going on?"

2. Try not to isolate yourself

When you're depressed, you may not feel like seeing anybody or doing anything, but isolating yourself only makes depression worse. Make it a point to stay social, even if that's the last thing you want to do.
Spend time with friends, especially those who make you feel good about yourself.

3. Remember that you are not alone

You might be surprised at how many other teens suffer from depression. You are not alone. Even though it can feel like depression will never lift, it will with proper treatment and healthy choices.

4. Keep your body healthy

When you're depressed, "being healthy" can sound impossible but small steps can help your mood a little at a time.

- Move a bit when you can. A short walk, stretching, or one song of dancing can help your brain feel calmer.
- Eat something that gives you energy. Simple foods (fruit, toast, soup) can keep you from feeling even more drained.

5. Avoid alcohol and drugs

You may be tempted to drink or use drugs in an effort to escape from your feelings. But alcohol and drugs can actually make those heavy feelings stronger over time. They can lower your mood, make it harder to cope, and sometimes increase thoughts of hopelessness.

If alcohol or drugs have become a way you cope, you're not alone. Support is available, and healing often involves getting help that's specific to substance use, alongside any care you're receiving for depression.

HOW TO ASK FOR HELP FROM TRUSTED ADULTS:

- Pick a lowkey time when you have their attention or plan ahead. You could say, “There’s something that I want to talk to you about, and it’s important. When are you going to be free to talk?”
- Say what you’re having trouble with, and how it’s affecting you. For example, “I’m not feeling like myself these days. I’m tired all the time, and I don’t want to do things after school. I feel sad all the time. I don’t feel right.”
- Don’t stress about figuring out *why* you feel this way, just share what you’re feeling and that you want help.
- If they say what you’re describing sounds ‘normal’ let them know that you’re pretty sure this is more serious than that.
- If it's hard to say the words out loud, try writing a letter or sending a message and then follow up. “I sent you a message yesterday, did you have any ideas or thoughts?”

RESOURCES:

- Reach out to us at **TeenTalk**-Text us at 360.984.0936 Nonjudgemental support from other teens who ‘get it’.
- **SW Washington Crisis Line: i**f things feel out of control, like someone might get hurt, you’re seeing or believing things that don’t make sense, or everything feels overwhelming, give them a call. They’re open 24/7 and can help you stay safe, talk things through, and connect you with support. 1.800.626.8137
- **988** is a number you can call or text when you’re feeling overwhelmed, scared, or just not okay and need someone to talk to right away. You get a real person who listens, supports you, and helps you feel safer in the moment.

CLARK COUNTY TEENTALK

NONJUDGMENTAL SUPPORT FOR TEENS, BY TEENS

Monday to Thursday: 4-9 pm and Friday: 4-7 pm
Call 360.397.2428
Text 360.984.0936
Email us at: teentalkclarkcounty@gmail.com
www.ccteentalk.clark.wa.gov

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