



Is Your Teen Depressed?

If you think your teen is depressed, you are not alone

Depression in youth ages 12 to 17 is fairly common, with 13.3% of teenagers having experienced a major depressive episode.¹ Additionally, 3.2% of children age 3 and older have received a diagnosis of depression.² There are proven ways your family can help.

How do I know if my teen is depressed?

If you notice any of these signs in your teen, consider talking to your doctor about screening them for depression.

- They seem sad or irritable for unclear reasons
- They have lost or gained weight or are eating more or less than usual
- They don't sleep at night or they sleep during the day
- They are avoiding you, their friends, or other loved ones
- They seem to have little energy
- They show signs of guilt, shame, or low self-esteem
- They are finding it hard to focus
- Their grades in school are dropping
- They have stopped taking care of their personal hygiene, like showering or brushing their teeth
- They express hopelessness about the future
- They are experiencing pain that has no clear medical cause
- They self-harm, such as by cutting or scratching themselves
- They mention thinking about suicide
- They report being bullied

What if my teen is thinking about suicide?

If your teen says they are thinking about suicide or shows suicidal behavior, talk to them right away. You can call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** at **1-800-273-8255**. **Call 911 if you need immediate help.**

How can I help?

Many families have found that these approaches have helped support a teen who has depression.

- **Talk about it:** Acknowledge your concerns. Ask your teen how they feel, and keep an open door for them to discuss their feelings.
- **Listen:** Let your teen talk without lecturing them. Respond respectfully to what they decide to share.
- **Encourage new activities:** Help them find new interests and join some new activities with them.
- **Promote a healthy lifestyle:** Encourage exercise, healthy foods, and enough sleep. Limit screen time.
- **Set an example:** Show them how to solve problems, ease stress, and use healthy coping strategies

The Power of Positive Parenting

Positive parenting focuses on shared trust and respect between the parent and child and can help teens stay happy and healthy. Try these positive parenting approaches.

- Meet their friends and show interest in their activities.
- Spend time together doing things you both enjoy.
- Celebrate their achievements.
- Respect their opinions and their privacy.
- Encourage them to become involved in their community.
- Talk to them about sensitive topics, like drugs and sex. Help them plan ahead to stay safe and encourage them to make their own healthy choices.
- Set expectations on what's important, like getting good grades, but work together with your teen to determine how to reach those goals.

¹ National Institute of Mental Health. (2021). *Major Depression*. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/major-depression>

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). *Children's Mental Health*. <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/data.html>