

Depression and Suicide

Depression is not just sadness. Everyone feels sad or down at times, but depression is a strong mood involving sadness, discouragement, despair, or hopelessness that lasts for weeks, months, or even longer. Depression involves the imbalance of naturally occurring chemicals in the brain. These chemicals, called neurotransmitters, affect mood but depression affects more than just a person's mood. It drains the energy, motivation, and concentration a person needs for normal activities. It interferes with the ability to notice or enjoy the good things in life.

Left untreated, depression can stay bad or get worse but with the right attention and care, depression can get better. Many people find that it helps to open up and talk to parents or other adults they trust. If you think you might be depressed, ask your parents or a trusted adult to arrange an appointment to see a doctor or therapist. If these adults can't help, talk to someone at your school like a school counselor or school nurse.

Symptoms of depression include:

- Lack of energy
- Withdrawal from people
- Loss of appetite or overeating
- Too much or too little sleep
- Negative feelings, mood, and thinking

Steps to Take for Depression:

- **Get a Medical Checkup:** The doctor can check for any health conditions that might be causing symptoms of depression.
- **Talk to a Counselor:** A psychologist, psychiatrist, or other therapist can evaluate and diagnose depression and create a plan to treat it.
- **Help Yourself:** Some simple things can have a powerful effect on mood. They include daily exercise, eating healthy foods, and getting the right amount of sleep.

Treatment for depression might include talk therapy, medication, or a combination of both.

Suicide is the act of intentionally taking one's life. Most people who commit suicide have severe depression.

Facts about suicide

Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for ages 15-24. It should be noted that some people who die by suicide do not show any suicide warning signs. But about 75 percent of those who die by suicide do exhibit some warning signs, so being aware of these warning signs means we will be better able to assist a loved one in need. The use of drugs/alcohol can put people at risk due to impaired judgment. If you do see someone exhibiting warning signs of suicide, you need to do everything you can to help him/her, which often includes connecting him/her with professional help.

Warning signs

- Feeling hopeless
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Neglecting basic needs
- Experiencing loss of energy
- Taking more risks
- Using alcohol and drug
- Giving away personal things

Words that warn:

- "I wish I were dead."
- "I just want to go to sleep and never wake up."
- "I won't be a problem for you much longer."
- "I can't take it anymore."
- "This pain will be over soon."
- "Nothing matters."

For any one person, the greater the number of warning signs, the greater the suicide risk.

- Take all talk of suicide seriously.
- Tell your friend suicide is not the answer.
- Try to change negative thoughts into positive ones.
- Don't keep a secret about suicide.

Check for Understanding

- List three myths about suicide.
- List three warning signs for suicide.
- Why should you take someone seriously when they talk about suicide?
- Should you ask your friend if they are thinking about suicide? Why or why not?
- What advice would you give a friend who has been extremely sad for a few weeks and is beginning to withdraw from all social events with their friends?

Coach's Reflection: