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## Teen Depression: How Caregivers Can Help

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**About the Author:**

C. Stephen Edwards, Director, Adolescent Psychiatry, [Lindner Center of Hope](#) is the author of this article on mental health clinics, teen depression and mood disorders. Dr. Edwards is board certified in general psychiatry, child and adolescent psychiatry and board eligible in pediatrics. As Director, Adolescent Psychiatry at Lindner Center of HOPE he oversees the adolescent inpatient and outpatient programs. He specializes in Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and abuse prevention. The Lindner Center of Hope offers a level of service to patients, families and referring physicians not typically found in health care today. The unique infrastructure provides access to cutting edge treatments years before they become widely available.

**Summary:**

Teen depression is a serious problem among young people. Learn the signs of depression and how you can help a teenager you love!

**Teen Depression: How Caregivers Can Help**

Teen depression is a serious problem in the United States. One in eight teens is likely to experience depression. Teen depression is much more than just bad moods, growing pains or even feeling down. Depression will impact every aspect of a teenager's life. It can lead to problems at school and at home, drug abuse, self-loathing, and even suicide or homicide. As a caregiver, it is vital for you to understand the warning signs of teen depression.

Here is a quick guide to the behavioral changes of which you should be aware:

- Sadness or Hopelessness
- Irritability, Anger or Hostility
- Frequent Crying
- Loss of Interest in Favorite Activities
- Changes in Sleeping or Eating Patterns
- Restlessness or Agitation
- Feelings of Worthlessness or Guilt
- Fatigue or Lack of Energy
- Difficulty Concentrating
- Thoughts of Death or Suicide

When evaluating your teen or a teenager you love, consider how long these symptoms have been present, how severe the symptoms are and how much the teen's behavior changed.

Do not assume your teen will show the same depression symptoms as an adult, as this mental illness will present itself in very different ways depending upon the age of the sufferer. Teens are more likely to show irritability or anger instead of sadness, and may become grumpy or easily frustrated. Teen depression can also manifest with unexplained aches and pains. Be aware of any headaches or stomachaches that are not able to be attributed to a physical

ailment. Depressed teens will show an extreme sensitivity to criticism. They have feelings of worthlessness, which makes them more vulnerable to criticism, rejection and failure.

If you know a teen who is exhibiting these symptoms, you can help them find treatment. Start by talking with the teen. Express your concerns in a comforting, non-judgmental way. Talk about specific behaviors and why those behaviors are concerning to you. Visit a doctor and have your teen screened for depression. This screening will include a physical exam and blood test to rule out any medical reasons that the teen may be experiencing symptoms of depression.

If there are no physical reasons for the symptoms, ask the doctor to refer you to a specialist. Make sure you get the teen's input. Your teen is an important part of this decision. He or she needs to feel comfortable with the specialist and the treatment setting or it will not help the recovery process. It is imperative to find someone with whom your teen can connect. Don't be afraid to explore a variety of treatment options – from one-on-one therapy or group therapy to medication – until you find what works best.

Never be afraid to talk with your teen about depression! In many cases, families are unaware of the symptoms of depression and they can easily miss the subtle signs. Many parents and caregivers can mistakenly assume their teen will show the same symptoms as an adult. Instead, learn the unique signs and symptoms of teen depression – it could mean the difference between life and death!