



Depression – a guide to helping young people

What is depression?

It's normal and natural to feel down or upset when we face challenging times or circumstances. It is also common for young people to experience emotional ups and downs during their teenage years and into adulthood. But when someone feels down, stressed and sad for longer periods of two weeks or more, and find this has an impact on their everyday lives, then it could be they are suffering from depression. Common symptoms include:

- Regularly feeling sad and tearful
- Having a lack interest in things they previously enjoyed
- Feeling tired, low on energy or exhausted
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling irritable or upset easily
- Being overly self-critical
- Eating more or less than usual
- Suffering from unusual aches and pains or illness
- Trouble sleeping - difficulties in getting off to sleep or waking up much earlier than usual
- Loss of self-confidence and self-esteem
- Wanting to withdraw from the world
- Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness
- Finding it hard to cope generally with life
- Feeling really anxious
- Developing self-harming issues
- Thinking about suicide and death

It's important to remember that depression can happen to anyone, and that a young person hasn't done anything wrong to deserve it happening to them. It also does not mean there is something wrong with them, only that they may need some help and support to get back to feeling like themselves again.

What causes depression?

Depression can be triggered by traumatic events happening in life, such as:

- Parents divorcing
- Suffering abuse
- Being bullied
- Illness in ourselves or loved ones
- Bereavement

Too much stress can also cause a young person to become depressed, for example if they feel they aren't coping at school or their lives are too busy. Depression can sometimes run in families, too, which can sometimes make them more genetically prone to becoming depressed.

Sometimes they may not be aware that we are depressed for some time, as they might not realise just how long they have been feeling sad for – it can creep up on people. Also, because some symptoms of depression are physical, they might think they are ill or just run-down for a while before they stop and see how low their mood has become.

Getting help with depression

Depression can make a person feel so detached and isolated from the world that the thought of telling someone how they are feeling can be overwhelming in the extreme. But one of the most important things is talk to someone honestly about their issues, however hard this may seem to them and however much encouragement they need to do so. The problem with depression is that often we can't cope with it alone – doing so could lead to serious and enduring issues with depression and make our lives miserable – yet it can make people feel ashamed or like it's their fault, to the extent it gets hidden from everyone.

If depression is making a young person feel unable to physically talk to someone, it can help to instead encourage them to write down how they are feeling and show it to someone they trust. This could be a parent, friend, teacher, or other relative. If things are seriously affecting them they should also talk to their GP as they can refer them for more intensive help as appropriate, but make it clear that you are there to help facilitate this, by helping to arrange the appointment on their behalf, and even attending with them if required. The act of sharing their worries can help them feel a little better as they won't be shouldering the burden alone any more.

Remember too, and remind them, that they aren't alone in feeling depressed, even though it commonly feels like a lonely experience. Other young people and adults get depressed too, and it is very possible to come out the other side with appropriate help.

Some other tips you use to help a young person with depression are:

- Encourage them to eat regularly even if they are small meals
- Keeping a diary to track their mood and emotions – this is a particularly useful tool if they feel unable to physically talk about their issues
- Trying some exercise even if they don't feel like it – it is proven to have a positive impact on mental health
- Take time to try and do some things they enjoy again – even if they can only manage this for short periods of time at first

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- Keep talking – make it clear they don't need to keep depression to themselves, there is no need to suffer in silence

Getting further help

The GP is there to help with both physical health problems and mental health problems like depression, and there are a number of treatments that they may feel a person would benefit from, depending on the severity of their symptoms:

- They may arrange to see the young person regularly to monitor how they are coping and advise them on diet and exercise to help with depressive symptoms
- They may be referred for talking treatments like CBT or counselling to give them an opportunity to work through their issues in greater detail - counselling is confidential and they'll work with a trained counsellor to look at their issues and work through them in their own time and in a safe environment. No one needs to know they are attending counselling if they don't wish them to
- Sometimes, if depression is deemed serious a person may be prescribed anti-depressant medication to help relieve their symptoms

It can also be helpful to utilise any student support services available to young people; many schools and most colleges and universities will offer counselling services to their students, and liaising with their tutors and teachers can allow the institution to gain a fuller picture of an individual's needs and tailor their support package accordingly. This could include a leave of study, coursework extension deadlines and regular one-on-one support sessions for the young person in question.

How can No5 help?

Learning to effectively deal with depression is important, as not dealt with it can cause longer-term issues and recurrent depression, so it is important to talk to somebody about it if things are becoming too much to handle. Here at No5 we offer free, impartial and confidential support to young people aged 10-25. Come and talk to us – counselling is about listening to, and helping YOU to work through your problems and find more effective ways of dealing with life's issues, in a caring, trusting environment.

Ways to contact us:

Counselling Phone: 0118 901 5668

Admin Phone: 0118 901 5649

E-mail: info@no5.org.uk

Address:

No5 Young People's Counselling and Information
2-4 Sackville Street
Reading, RG1 1NT

Social Media:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/no5youngpeople>

Twitter: @no5youngpeople

Our Opening Hours are:

Monday	16:00 – 21:00
Tuesday	10:00 – 13:00 and 16:00 – 21:00
Wednesday	16:00 – 21:00
Thursday	16:00 – 21:00
Friday	16:00 – 21:00
Saturday & Sunday	Closed

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