

## Spotlight on Teen Mental Health

Unfortunately, many teens experience depression and feelings of sadness or hopelessness. The instance of teen depression and suicide is rising at a rapid rate and parents need to understand what to look for in their teens. Teens suffering from depression have become so discouraged trying to cope with mounting pressures that they experience a persistent mood change resulting in overwhelming feelings of sadness, despair or anger. They see no hope for happiness or success, and as a result, their chances of achieving happiness and success are greatly diminished. Left untreated, depression can escalate into problems at school, home, and even in the community, including drug use as a means of self-medicating, suicide and other forms of violence to one's self and to others.

Although depression is a highly treatable condition, parents can miss the warning signs or misread depression as just another phase of adolescence. Depression is more than a prolonged bout of moodiness or sadness. Parents should be on the lookout for the following symptoms:

- Persistent sadness or helplessness
- Irritability, anger or hostility
- Frequent crying
- Withdrawal from most friends and family
- Lack of energy and difficulty concentrating
- Extreme sensitivity to criticism
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- Loss of interest in friends and activities

The following warning signs indicate a risk of suicide:

- Talking or even joking about committing suicide
- Expressions of hopelessness: "I might as well be dead."
- Glorifying death: "I bet people will remember me after I'm gone."
- Having a lot of accidents or engaging in reckless behavior
- Giving away favorite possessions
- Saying goodbye to friends and family
- Seeking out weapons, pills or other ways to harm themselves

If a teen is threatening to commit suicide, call a [suicide hotline](#) 988 or 911. In a non-emergency situation, such as a teen exhibiting signs of depression, parents can contact their family physician or a mental health professional. You can be a big part of the solution but should not try to do it all by yourself. You need to remember to take care of yourself as well.

To learn more about effective parenting skills, visit the Active Parenting Online Video Library. These helpful videos are offered free of charge by the ACFC in partnership with Active Parenting. Guidance and help are available for parents of children of all ages. To access the Online Video Library, go to the [ACFC website](#), click on the Active Parenting tab, and follow the instructions on how to view the videos.



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Choose from four available courses:

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- **Crossroads of Parenting & Divorce:** For divorced and divorcing parents

Continue your experience as an "active" parent by reviewing what you learn in the class in your accompanying parent guide. Each guide contains additional information, activities, and worksheets to help you practice what you learn.

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