



## REMEMBER

- Depression isn't the opposite of happiness, it's the opposite of hope. Tell them that you will be the carrier of hope in their life while they aren't able.
- It isn't always easy to differentiate between depression and normal teenage moodiness. Consider how long the symptoms have been present, how severe they are, and how different the teen is acting from his or her usual self. Depression will rob teens of who they were and what gave them joy.
- In 80% of cases, depression is treatable but young people usually don't know how to seek treatment on their own.
- Supporting a depressed teen can be difficult and draining. Be sure you develop a network of care—including the parents—to support the youth and each other.
- Young people experiencing depressive episodes often feel numb and fatigued. They have a negative view of themselves and their value to the world. They are trapped in the present pain and find it difficult to remember any good from the past or anticipate and joy in the future.



## RECOGNIZE

- 52% of youth surveyed recently said they felt so sad, discouraged, or hopeless that they wondered if anything was worthwhile.
- 10% of youth 15-24 are diagnosed with depression but only half of those are ever treated.
- Many teens experience times of situational depression as they learn to manage the difficulties of adolescence. If the feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness and sadness persist, causing them to step away from the things that formerly brought them joy, that is a red flag.
  - ▶ Some symptoms may be apathy, complaints of physical pains, (including headaches, stomach-aches), avoidance, guilt, or fatigue. Lack of attention to hygiene, impaired memory, and difficulty making decisions can also indicate a growing problem.
  - ▶ Irritability, aggression, and rage are sometimes more prominent than full withdrawal in youth.



## DEPRESSION

lifeteams  
resources



## RESPOND

If you are not a trained counsellor, your job is to build bridges between the depressed young person and the services that are available to them. Here are a few things you can do:

- **Bring it out in the open:** Normalize the feelings and tell them they aren't alone.
- **Get them to a medical doctor** to assess for depression and explore next steps.
- **Help them create and follow rhythms in their life:** regular bedtime, healthy eating, and daily exercise are essential for beginning to heal.
- **Listen:** A depressed teen may have a lot of words or very few. Put time aside to just sit and listen...or to just sit in compassionate silence with them.
- **Create boundaries for yourself:** Someone who feels they are drowning will naturally hold on tightly to help.
- **Develop a list** with the teen of people they can call/ways to respond when the sadness hits. Include a 24-hour helpline in their phone list, like kids help phone text line (text "connect" to 686868)
- **Watch for signs** of moving from despair to desperation: know in advance what to look for in a suicidal youth and what actions you must take in response.
- **Provide hope-filled distractions:** Don't allow depression to be the centre of every conversation.
- **Invite them into community:** Find places of belonging and significance where their contribution is valued now, not after they get "better".



## RESOURCES

[www.familysmart.ca/resources/](http://www.familysmart.ca/resources/) - Excellent resources to support families made by parents and teens dealing with mental health difficulties themselves.

[mindyourmind.ca](http://mindyourmind.ca) - A collection of helpful information for youth by youth.