

Depression

Childhood depression is different from the normal “blues” or everyday mood changes that kids experience while growing up.

Here are some warning signs of potential depression:

- Persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or worthlessness
- Withdrawal from their favorite activities
- Changes in appetite or sleep
- Difficulty concentrating
- Fatigue and low energy
- Physical complaints that do not respond to treatment
- Thoughts or talk of death and /or suicide

Recommended Actions

- **Offer support.** Let your child know you’re there for them — fully and unconditionally. Tweens and teens don’t like to feel patronized or crowded, so let your child drive the conversation.
- **Be gentle but persistent.** Don’t give up if your child isn’t ready to talk at first — the conversations can be stressful for them. Be respectful of their comfort level while still emphasizing your concern.

- **Listen without lecturing.** Resist any urge to criticize, pass judgment, or make ultimatums once your child begins to open up. It's important that your child is communicating.
- **Validate their feelings.** Don't try to "talk your child out of their depression," even if their feelings seem irrational to you. Simply acknowledge the pain and numbness they may be feeling. Let them know it's OK not to feel OK.
- **Encourage a healthy lifestyle.** Mental and physical health are closely intertwined. Make sure your child is eating nutritious food, exercising regularly, and getting enough sleep.
- **Get help for your child.** It's of utmost importance that you arrange professional help for your child if they need it. Talk with your child's school counselor, their physician, or a mental health professional to help them through their depression.

Helpful Resources

- [5 Things You Can Do to Help Your Child with Depression](#)
- [How to Talk to Your Teen About Depression](#)
- [National Institute of Mental Health](#)
- [Supporting Your Child with Depression](#)



Conversation Starters

- **What do you think is the difference between being sad and being depressed?**
- **Do you ever wish you were happier?**
- **Do you ever not feel like yourself?**