

Parent Talk

SEPTEMBER 2024

Teen Depression

Generally speaking, teens tend to experience higher rates of sadness and depression than younger kids or even those in their early 20's. In the height of your teenage years, you experience not only profound physical changes as your body and brain develop, but also social and emotional changes as you attend high school. Below, we list some of the most common contributing factors to teen depression and what caregivers and teachers can do to help those struggling.

Bullying

One of the leading causes of depression in teens is bullying. While not uncommon in middle school, bullying tends to be more rampant in high school settings. Teens can be exposed to verbal or physical abuse through bullying which can take a large toll on their mental health. Caregivers who suspect teens are being bullied should try to stay calm and gather as much information as possible. They should support their children and make sure not to retaliate against the bullies. Once they have a clear picture of the situation, they can approach the school's principal to discuss a plan.



New Environments

The sudden shift from middle school to high school can be very jarring for teens. In many cases, this can mean leaving old friends behind and having to navigate a new environment on their own. This lack of social support can lead to many cases of depression, as well as spikes in anxiety. Caregivers should encourage their teens to seek out opportunities for social development, including joining clubs or identifying a new hobby. Fear and anxiety can lead to teens not wanting to go to school at all, but caregivers should remain firm while still trying to support them.



Physical Development

Physical changes can commonly lead to depression in teens. Not only are their bodies changing in ways they might not understand, but their brains are rapidly developing which can cause mood swings or other intense bursts of emotion. Caregivers should encourage open dialogue around these issues and be transparent about what other changes their teens may experience. Books or other multimedia can be helpful tools during this process.



Social Development

Social changes can also be a big factor in the development of depression in teens. In addition to bullying as outlined above, in our teen years we are more commonly exposed to new social concepts and pressures. Peer pressure can lead teens to be exposed to things like drugs or alcohol for the first time. When used excessively underage, these substances can have significant impacts on the way brains develop. Alcohol itself is classified as a depressant, which can amplify feelings of sadness or hopelessness that teens may already be feeling. Additionally, social media remains a huge cause of teen depression. Many teens may obsessively compare themselves to those they see online, trying to become "perfect" like the popular influencers they are constantly exposed to. Social media is also an avenue for cyberbullying. Caregivers can help by limiting screentime and encouraging time away from electronics.



Need more help?

Resources at The Baker Center are just a click away

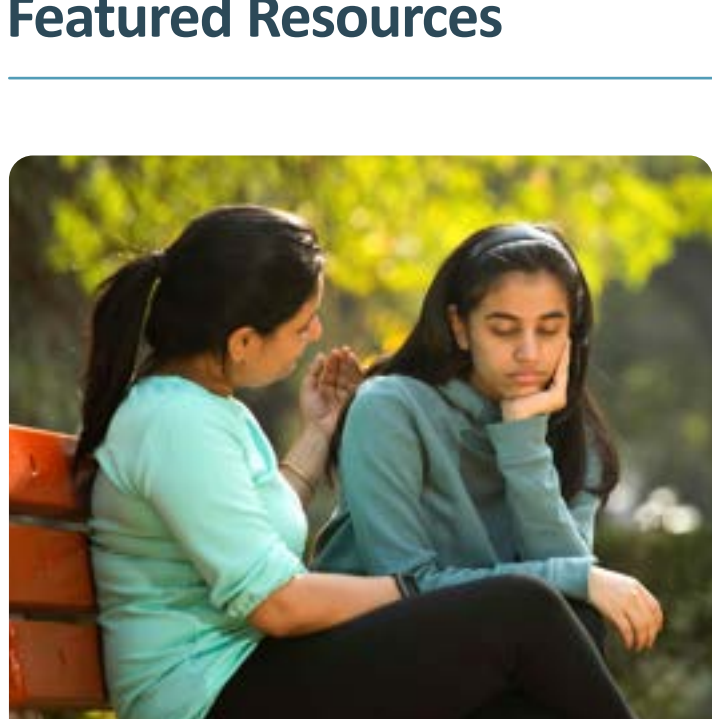
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Featured Resources



Safety Planning For Your High Risk or Depressed Teen

Join us on September 26th for this free webinar! In this seminar, we will discuss teenage depression, how to assess treatment for and manage the risk of self-harm and suicidal ideation, and how to proactively plan for your child's safety when they're struggling with mental health.

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Identifying and Treating Depression in Youth

In this seminar from September 2023, we explore how we can support children and teens by identifying and securing effective treatment for depression.

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LGBTQ+ Youth and Depression

Depression is typically categorized as a persistent feeling of sadness or apathy caused either by psychological or social factors (or sometimes a combination of both). In many cases of depression in LGBTQ+ youth, social factors are at the forefront.

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How Do I Know If My Child is Depressed?

Approximately 16% of children and teens in the United States have expressed struggles with depressive symptoms. This actually might be an underestimate of the overwhelming impact of depression; many believe rates have risen due to increased isolation during the pandemic and teen social interactions occurring more and more online and via social media.

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How Can I Help My Child With Their Depression?

If you think that your child or teenager is battling depression, whether you have recognized symptoms or if they have told you that they are struggling, it may be time to seek out some support from professionals.

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