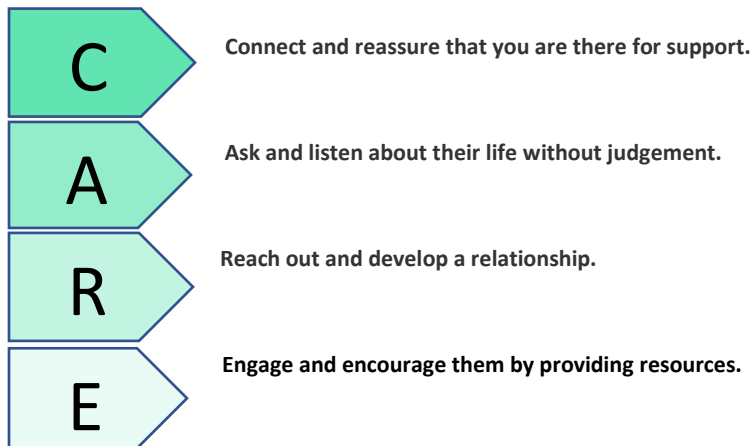


For our students with depression:



What is depression?

Depression is a clinical term used by psychiatrists to describe a time (at least two weeks) when a person feels very sad to the point of feeling worthless, hopeless and helpless. Everyone experiences unhappiness at some time in his or her life, and many people may become depressed temporarily when things are not going well. When a depressed mood persists, and begins to interfere with everyday living, it may be the sign of a serious state of depression that requires professional help.

Risk Factors for Depression

There is no single cause of depression. Stressful and discouraging situations naturally overwhelm and have the potential to become serious. Experiences of failure commonly result in temporary feelings of worthlessness and self-blame, while personal loss causes feelings of sadness, disappointment and emptiness. The onset of depression may sometimes be attributed to some of these factors:

- a genetic predisposition
- death or illness of friend/family member
- negative childhood experiences like abuse or neglect
- learning problems or difficulties at school
- poverty or social disadvantage
- difficulties with job or personal relationship
- poor self-esteem
- already a sensitive or anxious person
- lack of close relationships
- seasonal or hormonal changes
- substance use disorder or other mental illnesses (anxiety or psychotic disorder)

Researchers believe that a deficiency of certain chemicals in the brain and/or genetics may also affect how likely we are to develop an ongoing or serious depression. Any of the factors listed above may act as triggers to release disturbances in brain chemical function.

What are the symptoms?

Depression can change the way a person thinks and behaves, and how his or her body functions.

Some signs to look for are people experiencing at least five or more of the following symptoms every day for a minimum of two weeks:

- feelings of despair, hopelessness, or guilt
- feeling detached from life and those around you
- loss of interest in activities previously found enjoyable
- continued fatigue or loss of energy
- feelings of unusual sadness – crying for no apparent reason
- inability to concentrate or make decisions
- thoughts of suicide or death
- changes in eating or sleeping patterns (too much or not enough)
- persistent or recurring headaches or frequent gastrointestinal upsets
- weight loss or weight gain

What can friends and family do?

It is important to know that depression is an illness and no one should feel responsible for the depression. The depressed person should not be blamed or told to 'snap out of it'. Some people who are depressed keep to themselves, while others might not want to be alone. Listen and offer support rather than trying to contradict or talk an individual out of it. It is important that you let them know that it is all right to talk about their feelings and thoughts. Ask them how you can help and go with them to their family doctor or a mental health professional. Two areas to recognize that indicate crisis-suicidal thoughts or non-suicidal self-injury. Most of all, do not do it alone – get other people to provide help and support.

What are the treatments?

Depression is a treatable illness. No one must suffer needlessly. Most people with clinical depression feel a sense of relief when they learn the facts about this illness; they realize depression is not a personal weakness, and most importantly, they learn they are not alone.

Each case of depression is unique, so people may require different methods of treatment. The most common and successfully used treatments for depression are psychological counseling in combination with anti-depressant medication. Support from family, friends and self-help groups can also make a big difference.

Where can one go for help?

There are many people such as health professionals who can help a person with depression. These include but are not limited to the following:

- **Primary care physicians**
- **Nurse practitioners**
- **Other health professionals -youth workers or mental health nurses**
- **Psychiatrists, Psychologists**
- **Social Workers or Mental Health Providers**
- **Pediatricians**

For More Info

The Balanced Mind Foundation - www.bpkids.org

Brain & Behavior Research Foundation - www.bbrfoundation.org

Center for the Study of Prevention and Violence - www.colorado.edu/cspv

Cyberbullying Research Center - www.cyberbullying.us

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance - www.dbsalliance.org

Mental Health America - <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/>

Families for Depression Awareness - www.familyaware.org

National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare - www.TheNationalCouncil.org

National Institute of Mental Health - www.nimh.nih.gov

Stop Bullying Now Campaign - www.stopbullying.gov

Helplines

American Psychiatric Association Answer Center -1-888-35-PSYCH (77924)

American Psychological Association Public Education Line -1-800-964-2000

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-TALK (8255)