

Depression and Related Disorders

While we all feel down at times, kids with depression often have added sadness, frustration, irritability, hopelessness, withdrawal, exhaustion, worry, and/or disappointment. Kids may experience depression most of the day, or some of the time but falling back easily to a depressed mood. They may have difficulty engaging socially, with family, at school, or in other daily activities. It is estimated that up to 1 in 4 people will experience depression in their life.

It may feel overwhelming if this sounds like you or your child - What now? There is **Good News**- your child and family can **OVERCOME** these challenges and achieve great things! Following are supports and resources, further information, and skills to decrease depression.

Support and Resources:

- Anxiety and Depression Association of America:**

<https://www.adaa.org/>

- Hey Sigmund, Where the Science of Psychology Meets the Art of Being Human:**

<http://www.heysigmund.com/>

- National Alliance on Mental Illness, Utah:**

Phone: (801) 323-9900 Website: <http://www.namiut.org>

- US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Patient Medication Guide**

Website: https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/drugsatfda/index.cfm?fuseaction=Search.Search_Drug_Name

Diagnosis Information:

- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH):**

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/index.shtml>

- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP):**

http://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/FFF-Guide-Table-of-Contents.aspx

Skills to Decrease Depression:

- ❖ **Take care of yourself:** Eat healthy, exercise or play every day, and get 8 hours or more of sleep nightly.
- ❖ **Use relaxation techniques:**
 - **Deep Breathing:** Take deep breaths in through your nose so your stomach rises, pausing for a few seconds, before slowly breathing out through your mouth. Deep breathing can counteract the physical effects of stress and depression.
 - **Imagining a relaxing place:** Think of your favorite calming place, noticing what you see, smell, taste, touch, and hear to healthily distract and relax.
 - **Progressive Muscle Relaxation:** Gently tense the muscle groups in your body, one at a time. Then, relax that muscle group and completely relax for at least 15 seconds before moving onto the next muscle. Many people will add deep breathing and calming imagery while relaxing the muscle group. Move through your face, neck, shoulders and back, arms, hands, chest and stomach, legs, and feet one at a time. Be careful not to cause pain when tensing muscles.
 - **Do things you enjoy (or used to), laugh.**
- ❖ **Identify depression for what it is- depression, not a personal flaw or reality:** Label your depression symptoms and remember it is not who you are. It is a diagnosable condition just like diabetes or bronchitis, and we would never say or think we ARE diabetes or bronchitis. Remember you can feel better.

- ❖ **Make and keep supportive friendships and relationships:** Friend and family interaction is very important to decreasing withdrawal and low motivation. Talk to someone, get involved, and/or get out of the house daily.
- ❖ **Do not try to control things that cannot be controlled:** We can work to do our very best while recognizing and accepting what we cannot control. Remember, accepting does not equal approval. Nothing more frustrating and depressing than trying to change what we have no control over.
- ❖ **Recognize your strengths:** Make a list of your strengths, talents, and positive qualities. Think of times you have overcome difficulties with your strengths. Focus on what you do well and do not compare yourself to others.
- ❖ **Make meaning:** Find or make purpose, meaning, or value in the pain. Focus on any positive aspects of a painful situation you can find and remember them often. Make lemonade out of lemons.
- ❖ **Break down chores, schoolwork, and tasks into steps:** These duties are not as overwhelming when taking it one step at a time. Most of us were not worrying about graduating college on our first day of kindergarten!
- ❖ **Notice your feelings:** Identifying feelings put us in more control, with more insight. Potential feelings to identify include confident, exhausted, confused, happy, anxious, scared, sad, angry, surprised, hopeful, overwhelmed, jealous, calm, shy, bored, embarrassed, and lonely. Describe feelings using “I feel _____” statements.
- ❖ **Avoid negative guilt, shame, and blame:** Guilt; feeling overly bad about our action(s), shame; feeling we are “bad” because of our action(s), and blame can be overwhelming. We can focus on resolving the problem(s) that led to a tough situation instead. We may not have caused our difficulties and we have to solve them anyway.
- ❖ **Find the middle path:** Move away from black and white thinking/actions/words to the middle ground. Avoid words like “always” and “never”. Use words like “and”, “both” and “at the same time”. Recognize other points of view and find the piece of truth in each one.
 - **Example:** Instead of approaching a problem with “I am right” or “you are wrong”, approach it with “I see the situation one way AND you see it another.”
- ❖ **Change unhealthy thinking:** Notice unhealthy thoughts you have during the day and think of more healthy thoughts to replace them. Journaling such can be very helpful. Examples of unhealthy thinking include over generalizing, jumping to conclusions, not accepting the positive, and all or nothing thinking.
 - **Example:** Unhealthy thought-“I am not good enough and I am going to make a mistake”. Healthy Replacement Thought- “I am working hard and we all make mistakes at times. I can learn from them”.
- ❖ **Be mindful:**
 - What to do:
 - **Observe:** Notice what is going on around you including your thoughts and feelings. Use your 5 senses of what you see, smell, taste, touch, and hear.
 - **Describe:** Use words to describe what you are observing.
 - **Participate:** Be healthily in the moment, not thinking about yesterday or tomorrow. Example: If you are eating a favorite food, enjoy it and take your time as you chew. Notice how it feels to the touch, taste, smell, temperature, etc.
 - How to do it:
 - **Do not judge:** Notice without adding a value judgement of “good, bad, right, wrong, mean, etc.” Do not judge your judging.
 - **Stay focused:** Do one thing at a time, let go of distractions, concentrate.
 - **Do what works:** If a skill or idea helps without causing other problems, keep doing it.

THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE: If you or your child begins to have suicidal thoughts, please contact your treatment team immediately or call 911 in an immediate emergency. Effective treatment and safety planning can help you or your child overcome these challenges and find the hope to live!