A Parent's Guide to your Teenager's Mental Health

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Is It Teen Angst or Depression?
Depression in teens…

- May look different than adults
- Irritability or angry mood
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Withdrawing from others
- Extreme sensitivity to criticism and/or low self-esteem
- Sleep changes and tired all the time
- Acting out or acting in
Contributing Factors for Depression and Anxiety

- No **single** cause
- Biological predisposition
- Stress
- Trauma
- Social rejection/isolation
- Family issues or dynamics
- Suicidality as a solution to pain or problems
Depression in Teens is on the rise

- In America today, high school & college students are 5 to 8 times more likely to suffer from depressive symptoms as were teens 50-60 years ago.
- Overuse of technology
- Role of the media and social media
Anxiety is a general term for several disorders that cause nervousness, fear, apprehension, and worrying. These disorders affect how we feel and behave and can cause physical symptoms. Mild anxiety is vague and unsettling, while severe anxiety can seriously affect day-to-day living. -Medical News Today
Anxiety Statistics

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S., affecting 40 million adults in the United States age 18 and older, or 18.1% of the population every year.

Anxiety disorders are highly treatable, yet only 36.9% of those suffering receive treatment.

SAD is equally common among men and women and typically begins around age 13.

The average age of onset is 19, with 25 percent of cases occurring by age 14. One-third of affected adults first experienced symptoms in childhood.
Anxiety: Low-grade, chronic fear
STRESS
Relationship Between Stress and Depression

\[ \text{STRESS} = \uparrow \text{CORTISOL} \]

\[ \uparrow \text{CORTISOL} = \downarrow \text{DOPAMINE} \]

\[ \downarrow \text{DOPAMINE} = \text{DEPRESSION} \]
Stress

- No agreed upon definition
  - Emotional
  - Mental
  - Physical
  - Impact of change
Holmes-Rahe Stress Inventory

- 0-149
  - 150-199 mild stress; 35% chance of illness
- 200-299 moderate stress; 50% chance of illness
- 300+ major stress; 80% chance of illness
Can You Guess?
Top 5 Adult Stressors

1. Money
2. Work
3. Performance
4. Bereavement
5. Personal Issues or Events
Can You Guess?
Top 5 Teen Stressors

1. Family Problems
2. School
3. Friends
4. Body Image
5. Romantic Relationships
Suicide

• Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among children and young adults aged 10 to 24
• Increase in suicide rates in adolescents, particularly, adolescent girls age 10-14
• Adolescents are more likely to attempt suicide
Recognizing Suicide Warning Signs

- Suicide threat and/or statements revealing a desire to die
- Having a suicide plan, method, and means
- Preoccupation with death
- Depression and marked changes in behavior
- Making final arrangements (e.g., giving away prized possessions)
Can You Guess the Top 10 Reasons Teens Avoid Telling Their Parents About Suicidal Thoughts?

1. Some parents offer reassurance and encouragement w/o listening
2. Some parents become so overwhelmed w/ fear that child ends up consoling them
3. Some parents get angry and say, “How could you think about doing this to me?”
4. Some parents take it personally and say, “if you love me, you won’t think about it”
5. Some parents blame their child rather than attributing it to depression
6. Some parents overreact and immediately send their child to the hospital
7. Some parents do not take their children seriously and refuse to go to counseling
8. Some parents dismiss the child as manipulative and think they are trying to get attention
9. Some parents become impatient and ask multiple times if they are still thinking about it
10. Some parents become overprotective and don’t let child out of their site
Some Important Risk Factors for Suicide

- Previous suicide attempts
- History of substance abuse
- Physical disability or illness
- Relationship problems
- Losing a friend or family member to suicide
- Access to harmful means
- Recent death of a family member or close friend
- History of a mental health condition
- Ongoing exposure to bullying behavior
PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- Parent connectedness
- Academic achievement
- Awareness of and access to local health services
- Neighbourhood safety
- Overall resilience
- Connections to other non-parental adults
  - School safety
  - Closeness to caring friends
Controversial TV Series: *13 Reasons Why*

The Netflix TV Series *13 Reasons Why* magnifies many concerning issues that teens regularly encounter at school like emotional and physical abuse, depression, and struggles with mental health. Aimed at teen audiences, the show glamorizes suicide, and fails to address available resources to help struggling students, leaving them feeling hopeless. All negatives aside, the series has created an environment for viewers to discuss the topic with friends and family, which is a step in the right direction.
13 Messages Every Teen Needs To Hear:

- You are significant
- You do matter
- Your story is still being written
- You will accomplish great things
- There is help and healing
- You can be a light for someone else

- You will become stronger
- Life can change at any moment
- You have a gift
- You can be forgiven
- You are worthy
- You belong here
- You are loved
- Is there a passive death wish?
- Are there abstract thoughts of death?
- Are there concrete suicidal ideas?
- Is there an active plan?
- Are there arrangements
- Has there been an announcement of the suicidal act?
- Are there previous suicide attempts
- Protective factors

“Do you have any thoughts of death in your current challenging situation?”

“What exactly do you mean that you would be better off dead?”

“Are you thinking about hurting yourself?”

“What exactly is on your mind when you say that you wouldn’t mind ending your life?”

“How often and for how long do you have suicidal thoughts?”

“Apart from me, have you already talked about it with somebody?”

“Have you already tried to attempt suicide?”

“Is there anything that keeps you alive?”
Relationship to High Risk Behaviors

- High risk behaviors could lead to mental health problems
- Mental health problems could lead to high risk behaviors

\[
\text{STRESS} = \uparrow \text{CORTISOL} \\
\uparrow \text{CORTISOL} = \downarrow \text{DOPAMINE} \\
\downarrow \text{DOPAMINE} = \text{CRAVING}
\]
Preventing, managing, and treating depression, anxiety, stress, suicidality, and related high risk behaviors

• Catch depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation early
• Early intervention with a trained professional
• Manage stress levels and modify the environment as needed
• Increase healthy coping
• Provide education and information on impact of high risk behaviors
• Increase adolescent social support and inclusion
Apps that help
Tools for Parents

• Validation

• Grounding techniques

• Mindful breathing
Holiday Tips

• Reinforce good sleep habits
• Encourage healthy eating and regular exercise
• Be available and stay connected
• Ask how you can help and connect them to resources
• Reinforce your teen’s ability to cope
• Utilize behavior modification contracts for homework & expected behaviors
• Foster positive relationships
• Monitor social media regularly
• Take care of yourself

Self-Care

IT’S OKAY TO MAKE MISTAKES

Eat
Positive Thinking
Better Healthy Living
Feel
Regular Exercise
Good
References


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