

**The Center for Christian Counseling  
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*I waited patiently for the Lord;  
he turned to me and heard my cry.  
He lifted me out of the slimy pit,  
out of the mud and mire;  
he set my feet on a rock  
and gave me a firm place to stand.  
He put a new song in my mouth,  
a hymn of praise to our God.  
Many will see and fear the Lord  
and put their trust in him.  
-Psalm 40:1-3*

**Question #1**

**How do we know when our teenager is just being moody vs. actually needing real professional help?**

**Depression is one of the most common emotional problems in teens and also one of the most treatable.** During the teen years, a vast number of physical, emotional, and mental changes occur that make teens more susceptible to feelings of confusion or sadness. Everyone has days when they feel more happy or more sad. Normal sadness passes in a reasonable amount of time, and they start feeling better again soon.

Depression last longer and feels deeper than normal sadness. It may cause your teen to feel very bad about him or herself, or hopeless about the future. It affects their thoughts, behavior, appetite, or ability to sleep. Depression may cause your child to see reality in a distorted way, as if everything is negative and difficult, and problems may appear to be bigger than they can bear. Teens who feel depressed often feel very tired physically and emotionally. They may stop spending time with friends or doing other things that used to give them pleasure, because they just don't feel up to it. They may also start to complain of physical problems, such as headaches and stomachaches. At its worst, depression can make teens feel as if they don't want to be alive.

**If your teen's feelings of depression do not go away, if they get worse, or if they begin to frighten you, seek professional help.** Whether the feelings of depression are mild or intense, long term or temporary, inherited or situational, they can be treated. The more you and your teen understand about depression and the more you learn about how to combat it, the easier it will be to either manage the feelings or eliminate them altogether.

**Question #2**  
**What tools/techniques are effective at helping a young person dealing with depression?**

**Spiritual:**

- Pray for and with your child (Power of a Praying Parent by Stormie Omartian)
- Encourage, love, and support your child. Role model Christ's love for them
- Foster youth group participation/involvement
- Encourage friendships/community/mentorships with solid role models
- Serving others

**Family:**

- Model a strong prayer life and active walk with the Lord (Sticky Faith)
- Create and foster a strong support system
- Good communication skills
- Healthy conflict management

**Lifestyle:**

- Prioritizing sleep
- Exercise
- Healthy eating
- Routine/structure
- Problem solving
- Stress management
- Creative expression
- Strong social networks

**Treatment:**

- Individual Psychotherapy - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Group Psychotherapy
- Medication
- Day Treatment
- In-Patient Hospitalization

### Question #3

#### What steps should be taken if my teenager needs real help?

Anytime you have a concern about a young person's actions and/or behaviors, **be proactive – have a conversation with your teen.** Listen! Talk openly and honestly with your child or your child's friends about your concerns and be supportive in helping them cope with their feelings. **Seek professional help by scheduling an appointment with a counselor.** You can also contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-Talk (8255) for help and assistance. If an emergency- Call 911.

**Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for teens.**

**Four out of Five teens who attempt suicide have given clear warning signs. What are the warning signs of suicide?**

#### **Suicide Threats: Either Direct or Indirect Statements**

People who talk about suicide, threaten suicide or call suicide crisis lines are 30 times more likely than average to kill themselves. Take suicide threats seriously.

- "I'd be better off dead."
- "I won't be bothering you much longer."
- "You'll be better off without me around."
- "I hate my life."
- "I am going to kill myself."
- Suicide threats are not always verbal.
  - Text messages
  - Social networks
  - Twitter

#### **Previous Suicide Attempts**

- One out of three suicide deaths is not the individual's first attempt.
- The risk for completing suicide is more than 100 times greater during the first year after an attempt.
- Take any instance of deliberate self-harm seriously.

#### **Preoccupation or Obsession with death or suicide**

- Essays, writing about death
- Poems about death
- Artwork, drawings depicting death

## **Depression**

- Sudden, abrupt changes in personality
- Expressions of hopelessness and despair
- Declining grades and school performance
- Lack of interest in activities once enjoyed
- Increased irritability and aggressiveness
- Withdrawal from family, friends and relationships
- Lack of hygiene
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits

## **Final Arrangements**

Once the decision has been made to end their life, some young people begin making final arrangements.

- Giving away prized or favorite possessions
- Putting their affairs in order
- Saying goodbye to family and friends
- Making funeral arrangements

## **Other Signs**

- Experiencing a recent loss – a loved one, relationship, job, etc.
- Increased use or abuse of alcohol or drugs
- Recent separation or divorce of parents
- Feelings of loneliness or abandonment
- Feelings of shame, guilt, humiliation or rejection
- Emotional stress and difficulties may result in physical complaints, such as headaches, stomach-aches, loss of energy, etc.
- Taking excessive risks, being reckless
- In real or serious trouble, especially for the first time
- Problems staying focused or paying attention

Remember: This is not an all-inclusive list of signs of concern. Anytime you notice behaviors that concern you, don't hesitate or be afraid to ask questions.

*"The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." - Deuteronomy 31:8*



