

# Depression, Suicide, & Self-Injury

## Depression

### What is it?

Depression is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness or loss of interest which impacts how a person feels, thinks, and behaves. Individuals living with depression may have trouble doing normal day-to-day activities.

### Signs & Symptoms in Children and Teens

Common symptoms of depression in children and teens are similar to those of adults, but there can be some differences.

- In younger children, symptoms of depression may include sadness, irritability, clinginess, worry, aches and pains, refusing to go to school, or being underweight.
- In teens, symptoms may include sadness, irritability, feeling negative and worthless, anger, poor performance or poor attendance at school, feeling misunderstood and extremely sensitive, using drugs or alcohol, eating or sleeping too much, self-harm, loss of interest in normal activities, and avoidance of social interaction.
- Depression may occur with other mental health conditions, such as anxiety, eating disorders, substance abuse or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

## Suicide

Suicide claims the lives of over 40,000 Americans each year. It is the second leading cause of death in young people ages 15-24. The strongest risk factor for suicide is depression.

### Warning Signs of Suicide

- Talking about suicide — for example, making statements such as "I'm going to kill myself," "I wish I was dead" or "I wish I hadn't been born"
- Getting the means to commit suicide, such as buying a gun or stockpiling pills
- Withdrawing from social contact and wanting to be left alone
- Having mood swings, such as being emotionally high one day and deeply discouraged the next
- Being preoccupied with death, dying or violence
- Feeling trapped or hopeless about a situation
- Increasing use of alcohol or drugs
- Changing normal routine, including eating or sleeping patterns
- Doing risky or self-destructive things, such as using drugs or driving recklessly
- Giving away belongings or getting affairs in order when there is no other logical explanation for why this is being done

- Saying goodbye to people as if they won't be seen again
- Developing personality changes or being severely anxious or agitated, particularly when experiencing some of the warning signs listed above

## **Self-Injury**

### **What is it?**

Self-injury, or self-harm, is the act of deliberately harming your own body often by cutting or burning. It is an unhealthy way of coping with emotional pain, anger, or frustration and is often done impulsively. Self-injury may be linked to a variety of mental disorders, including depression, eating disorders, and borderline personality disorder.

### **Signs & Symptoms**

- Scars, such as from burns or cuts
- Fresh cuts, scratches, bruises or other wounds
- Broken bones
- Keeping sharp objects on hand
- Wearing long sleeves or long pants, even in hot weather
- Claiming to have frequent accidents or mishaps
- Spending a great deal of time alone
- Pervasive difficulties in interpersonal relationships
- Persistent questions about personal identity, such as "Who am I?" "What am I doing here?"
- Behavioral and emotional instability, impulsivity and unpredictability
- Statements of helplessness, hopelessness or worthlessness

### **Resources**

Samariteens Hotline	800-SOS-TEEN
Riverside Crisis Team	800-529-5077
Samaritans Hotline	617-247-0220
National Suicide Prevention	800-276-TALK
National Hope Line Network	800 – SUICIDE
McLean 3East (self-injury)	877-967-7233

A Relentless Hope: Surviving the Storm of Teen Depression by Gary Nelson

I Just Want You to be Happy: Preventing and Tackling Teenage Depression by Rowe Bennett  
Tonge

Rescuing Your Teenager from Depression by Norman T Berlinger

When Nothing Matters Anymore: A Survival Guide for Depressed Teens by Bev Cobain

Helping Teens who Cut: Understanding and Ending Self-Injury by Michael Hollander