



DEPRESSION IN YOUTH

Unhappiness and passing feelings of sadness are common, normal experiences for children and adolescents. When this depressed mood persists for several weeks, deepens, and starts interfering with school and everyday life, it becomes an illness.

Description

Depression as an illness is a serious condition that brings about substantial changes in mood, behaviour, and thinking. It affects 6% - 10% of children ages 6 -12 and 8% of adolescents.

Girls are diagnosed with depression five times more often than boys. The common signs of depression in girls are sadness, withdrawal from family and friends, and turning inward. Boys, on the other hand, frequently demonstrate acting out behaviours.

Sometimes the signs of depression in youth are masked and are difficult to recognize. The signs are often labelled as “acting out behaviours,” and result in punishment rather than treatment for depression.

Common Signs Of Depressions In Youth

At School:

- Limited attention span
- Inappropriate expression of emotions
- Withdrawal from school activities
- Increase in self-destructive behaviour
- Decline in school work performance

In General:

- Persistent sadness
- Aggressive or angry outbursts
- Change in sleeping patterns
- Demonstrate low self-esteem

Acting Out Behaviours:

- Substance abuse
- Sexual promiscuity
- Running away from home
- Fighting with friends, family, and teachers

Treatment

Depression is a very treatable illness. To prevent chronic illness from developing it is important to recognize and treat depression and its symptoms as early as possible. There are many treatments available that can be used alone, or in combination:

- Counselling
- Psychotherapy
- Support groups
- Medication
- Self-help groups

Help Can Make A Difference

Many people who are depressed wait too long to seek treatment or do not seek treatment at all. You can help by:

- Recognizing the clues or warning signs
- Insisting and encouraging the person to seek professional help
- Understand that depression is painful
- Make sure the person gets adequate nutrition and water
- Guard against suicide

Help Is Available

- Talk to your teacher, school counsellor, school administrators
- Talk to your family
- Talk to your doctor
- Talk to your pastor, minister, or priest
- Call your local CMHA office
- Book an appointment with a psychiatrist, or social worker
- Find out more about depression

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