

How to help a friend who is depressed:

Friends are often the first to notice when someone shows signs of depression. So as a friend, be ready to help with some simple steps. Pay attention to signs that might be depression, be a good listener and encourage friends to get help.

Watch for signs

Your eyes and ears are good tools to detect depression. A depressed friend may move, walk and/or talk very slowly. They might cry a lot or say a lot of negative things about themselves or the world around them. They might not pay much attention to how they look, what they wear or how they do in school.

Listen and reassure

Just listen and try not to judge. Don't tell them that they should not feel the way they feel. Tell them you think they might be depressed. Reassure them that depression is a common mental disorder and people can get help and recover.

Help them get help

There is good help available. Encourage them to see a family doctor, a guidance counsellor or a qualified mental health therapist. If they won't get help, tell a responsible adult that your friend may need help.

Watch for more serious problems

Depression is a risk factor for suicidal behaviour. If you are worried that a friend is thinking about suicide, get immediate help by calling a crisis line, a counsellor or telling a responsible adult.

Resources

There is help available 24-7 at

- Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868
- Mental Health Help Line: 1-877-303-2642
- HealthLink Alberta: 1-866-408-5465

Check out these websites:

www.griponlife.ca
www.kidshelpphone.ca
www.mindyourmind.ca
www.beyondblue.org.au/ybblue/
www.cmha.ca
www.moodgym.anu.edu.au
www.reachout.com.au
www.suicideinfo.ca
www.youthone.com
www.calgaryurbanvibe.ca/teenlinevibe



www.albertahealthservices.ca

Depression

It's more common than you think



It can affect anyone

Depression is a common problem among young people. It's what you do about it that makes a difference to your well-being.

What is depression?

Okay, so you're moody and withdrawn, and it takes wild horses to drag you out of bed in the morning. Well, you're a teenager and maybe that's normal. But if these behaviours are getting in the way of school, your job or spending time with family and friends, you may have depression. The good news is that depression can be treated and you can enjoy your life again.

Everyone feels sad at times, like when you break up with your boyfriend or girlfriend, when you lose someone you love or when things go wrong at work or school. Just because you're feeling sad or down doesn't mean you're depressed. If you have depression you'll feel sad, down or miserable most of the time and you'll find it hard to cope from day to day. If the following symptoms last two weeks or longer you may be experiencing depression.

Feelings

- Intense sadness that does not go away
- Loss of interest in things that used to be enjoyable
- Feeling hopeless
- Feeling helpless
- Irritable and angry

Thoughts

- Less confidence or low self esteem
- More trouble than usual making decisions
- Thoughts of death or suicide



Behaviour

- Crying easily and often
- Avoiding friends and family
- Not keeping up personal appearance
- Neglecting responsibilities like school assignments, chores and work

Physical

- Low energy
- Walking and talking very slowly
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Eating too much or too little

Dealing with depression

You can't keep sad or bad things from happening. But you can take care of yourself so when those things do happen you will be able to handle them.

Be honest with yourself and others

Talk about your troubles with someone you trust. Reach out to the people who care about you. Get out and see your friends. Spend time with your family.

Writing... it's not just for school assignments

Writing down your feelings, or keeping a journal, can help you understand your feelings or look at a situation in a different way. You may find that you see your problems in a different light.

Lists aren't all bad

Make a list of all the things you enjoy doing and then plan to do one thing from this list each day.

Get moving!

It's a fact that exercise helps you feel good both physically and mentally. Walk the dog, shoot some hoops or strap on some roller blades.

Catch enough ZZZZZs

Your body needs its rest so make your bedroom a place where you can get a good night's sleep. Keep school work and other stressful things away from your sleeping space. Don't eat or exercise right before bedtime. Read a book or practice relaxation techniques before you go to sleep.

Drugs and alcohol...never a good idea

You might be tempted to use alcohol, drugs or stimulants, like caffeine and energy drinks, to feel better. The feeling is temporary and the after effects often make you feel worse.

Treating depression

Depression is a common medical illness and sometimes this means you need to see a doctor. Depression can be treated with medication, therapy or both. If you think you might be depressed talk to your doctor or another health professional.