

Guiding Your Child Through Depression

[Depression: Guiding Your Child Through Depression | Free Family Webinar with Hays CISD & Daybreak Health](#)

Passcode: gaZ7*UMd

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Our Mission:
A world where every young person benefits from mental health support

Our Services:
Online counseling, designed for teens

Learning Objectives

- Learn about the prevalence and impact of depression
- Identifying signs and symptoms of depression
- Learning ways to support your child
- Connecting to available resources
- Q&A



Safe Space Guidelines

A Message To You

Take Care of Yourself & Each Other

Today's topic can be a difficult one to discuss. We recognize that this discussion may bring up strong emotional reactions. Feel free to step away at any time.

Reach Out for Help

While our conversation today will be guided by a licensed clinician, this class is not intended as diagnosis or treatment of depression. Please reach out if you need further help or information.

Know There is Hope

Our conversation today will focus on the prevalence and impacts of youth depression today, while also covering information, strategies, and tools we can all use to be part of the solution.

Depression: Signs & Symptoms

Emotions

- Emotions are an **expected reaction** to situations, people, or thoughts – *emotions can be messengers for what we need*
- Emotions usually do not impact **life functioning**
- They are a **temporary** feeling state such as the “blues” or feeling “stress”
- Emotions are only **one symptom** of mental illness

Depressive Disorders

- A **mental disorder** impacts quality of life and functioning
- Symptoms can impact our **energy, motivation** and general enjoyment of life
- A **persistent** mood state – Cannot “*snap out of it*”
- Can last for **weeks, months or longer**

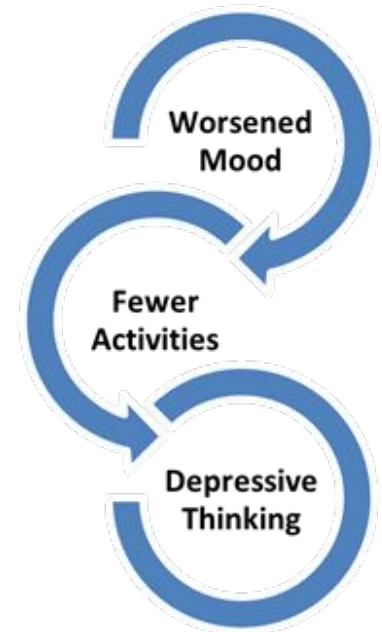
Prevalence of Depression

- From 2016–2020, youth diagnosed with depression increased from **3.1%** to **4.0%**, around **2.4 million kids**
- In 2022, the CDC found that **37%** of high school students reported they experienced poor mental health during the pandemic
- The CDC also found that over the past year,
 - **44%** of adolescents reported feeling ***persistently sad*** or ***hopeless*** and;
 - **22%** of teens reported seriously considering suicide

Diagnosing a Depressive Disorder

Major Depressive Episode

- Depressed mood*
- Lack of enjoyment/interest in activities*
- Weight loss/weight gain
- Insomnia or sleeping too much
- Affected speech, decreased movement, impaired cognitive functioning
- Fatigue
- Feeling worthless or excessive/inappropriate guilt
- Decreased concentration
- Thoughts of death, dying, suicide



Depressive Symptoms & Behaviors

Common signs and symptoms of depression may include:

- Changes in **moods**– sadness, anger, numbness, irritability
- **Loss of interest** in activities: low motivation, procrastination, isolation
- **Self-harm** or **substances**
- Changes in **appetite** or **sleeping habits**
- **Low self esteem**, more negative thoughts, feelings of worthlessness
- Difficulty maintaining daily routines: **hygiene** practices, **sleeping** habits
- Not turning in homework, **declining grades**
- **Verbal statements** or hopelessness, helplessness, wanting to die

What Causes Depression?

There is no one cause for depression- there are **many factors** that contribute to depressive episodes

Risk Factors: Circumstances and experiences which may elevate a person's risk for a condition/circumstance. Many people who experience risk factors do not develop a depressive disorder

- May be related to mood, health, environment, past experiences, etc.

Stressors: These are events, situations, individuals, comments, or anything we interpret as negative or threatening

- A stressor is anything that causes the release of stress hormones (psychological or physiological)

Risk Factors

Biological Factors

- Health/physical factors, such as illness or bodily trauma
- Genes/family history
- Brain chemistry

External factors

- Seasons
- Substance abuse
- Life events, transitions
- Trauma, including *Adverse Childhood Experiences* (ACEs)
 - abuse, violence, neglect, etc.

A **combination** of different environmental and genetic factors most commonly lead to mental health challenges

Common Stressors

- **At school**

- Expectations, workload, grades, etc.
- Difficulty with impulsivity, disruptive behaviors
- Bullying/problems in social relationships

- **At home/in the community**

- Family conflict
- Transitions/traumatic events
- Feeling misunderstood or unheard by others
- Circumstances beyond the child's control: (*physical health, parentified or caregiving roles, language barriers, lack of space/privacy*)

We all experience stressors, and there are some things that are out of our control. Being aware of these and trying to support children through stressful events or situations can help them to cope and build resilience.

How to Support Your Child

How Parents Can Help

- **Check-in** with them on a regular basis, **stay connected**, and **encourage** youth to tell you about their problems. When they do, truly listen
- Express **interest** in their interests & their friends, including supporting the activities they love
- Express **compassion** and remind your child *often* that you love them and that you are there to **support** them no matter what
 - Your child may feel ashamed or guilty for feeling depressed. Remind them they are not alone, reaching out for help is not a sign of weakness and it won't mean they're a burden to others.

How Parents Can Help with Depression

- **Validate** their feelings. You might not understand why they feel the way they do – that's okay. Sometimes there's no "reason" behind feelings of depression. Let them know it's okay to feel their feelings, and that you are there for them. *When they're ready, you can work on solutions.*
- **Encourage** them to be active. You can't always "think" your way out of your feelings, but you can sometimes "act" your way out. Try to help them do a couple of small things each day that may be able to help.
- **Offer assistance** with things that might be tough – like hygiene or getting outside. It's okay if all they can manage is to splash some water on their face, or get walk one time around the block – these are steps in the right direction. Building a routine can help here.

Coping with Depression

Coping with depression can involve

- **Positive self-talk** – “I can get through this.”
 - Prepare and repeat positive/encouraging statements about yourself: talk to yourself like you would talk to someone you love.
 - Make a list of things you like or love about yourself and keep it somewhere you can see it.
- **Questioning negative thoughts/beliefs** – “Is that true, or is it the depression talking?”
- **Connecting with others** Reaching out to someone for support, talking or sitting quietly, a hug from a family member, friend, or pet

Coping with Depression

- Getting ourselves to try **things we enjoy** doing or that we know will help us **feel better afterwards**, even if we have low motivation
 - Get outside, move your body, walk your dog, do some light stretches, get sun/fresh air – even if it's just sitting outside for a few minutes
- **Choosing an intentional distraction:** watch a feel good movie/episode, read a book, make a playlist and listen to it, make art or color, take a bath
- Start small: the first step is always the hardest.

Sometimes it can be hard to remember that these feelings are temporary. Help your child remember that these feelings will pass. Maybe they have felt this way before, and it didn't last forever.

Ask them what has helped them when they've felt this way in the past, and build a list of coping skills they can use to try to feel better.

Coping Skills for Self-Harm

Alternatives for self-harm and harmful risk taking:

- Listen to music/blast music
- Release emotions through crying, screaming into a pillow/out loud
- Spend time with a pet/take for a walk
- Talk to a loved one
- Write/journal
- Cover a piece of paper with scribbles; draw what's making you upset + rip it up
- Substitute different sensations: snap a rubber band on your wrist
- Use cold/hot sensations: hold or rub an ice cube, hot or cold shower
- Draw on yourself where you want to cut
- Prioritize safety: remove/lock weapons/drugs in the house, have emergency resources available (811), don't leave alone if high risk

Gratitude & Worry Boxes

Exploring things you're worried about and things you're grateful for can be helpful.

Writing down what you're worried about can help get it out of your head and onto paper, where it may not feel so big and scary.

Writing down things you are grateful for can help you remember things that make you feel happy when you're not feeling so great.

You can do this in a journal, or decorate a box to be your "**gratitude box**" or "**worry box**"

- maybe every day write down something that you are grateful for and put it in the box to revisit later, or
- write down things you're worried about when you're feeling overwhelmed. No right or wrong way!



Questions to Ask

Do I have depression?



- Do you often feel sad, anxious, worthless, or even “empty”?



- Have you lost interest in activities you used to enjoy?

- Do you get easily frustrated, irritable, or angry?



- Do you find yourself withdrawing from friends and family?



- Are your grades dropping?

- Have your eating or sleeping habits changed?



- Have you experienced any fatigue or memory loss?



- Have you thought about suicide or harming yourself?

Depression looks different for everyone. You might have many of the symptoms listed above or just a few.

When to Seek Help

- **You know your child best.** Talk to child about your concerns, especially when you notice *changes* in their behavior.
- **Access resources.** Talk to your child's healthcare professional or school supports if you have concerns about the way your child behaves at home, in school, or with friends.
Treatment options can include a check-up with pediatrician, individual or family therapy, school counseling, support groups, medication
- **Early diagnosis & treatment.** Early diagnosis and appropriate treatment can be very impactful, though treatment can be effective at any point.

Talking to Your Child about Getting Help

- Remind them that mental health issues are common, and can happen to anyone. Talk about emotions and have check-ins with them often, and keep conversations between you and your child private
- Let them know they are in control – in therapy they can share what they want, they can stop whenever they want, and what they share in therapy is private
- Normalize mental health through sharing other people's experiences– your own/family history if appropriate, [celebrities](#), important role models
- Bring in *hope* and the idea that they could be feeling better in just a few weeks or months with the right coping skills and support

Resources

Hays CISD Resources



- [Hays CISD Guidance & Counseling Resources](#)
- [Hays CISD Community Resources 23-24](#)

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Upcoming Classes with Daybreak

Teen Substance Use & Abuse

Tuesday, December 12 | 6:30–7:30 pm

- Learn about the prevalence of teen alcohol and drug use
- Understand differences between use, abuse, and dependence
- Recognize warning signs in teens
- Learn how to talk to your kids about alcohol and drug, and harm reduction



Thank You!

CONTACT

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