



# WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

## Depression Defined

Depression is one of the most common mental disorders in the US, impacting millions of people every year. This is characterized by feelings of extreme:

- sadness
- anxiousness
- hopelessness

Depression can interfere with everyday life, making it harder to perform ordinary tasks. Although it may be common, it is a serious illness and should be treated by a healthcare professional.

## More Than Just Feeling Down

It's normal, especially for teens and young adults, to experience emotional ups and downs. Depression, however, is more than just feeling sad from time to time. If you've experienced overwhelming feelings of sadness for weeks or months at a time (especially if it is getting in the way of your life), it's possible that you could be suffering from depression.

***It's important to recognize that seeking help is the healthy decision, and not a sign of weakness.***

# Ever Had These Feelings?

**While depression should only be diagnosed by a healthcare professional**, some symptoms are pretty common and can serve as a conversation starter between you and your counselor. Do you or someone you know have any of the following symptoms?

- Constantly feeling sad, anxious, or "empty"
- Feeling like everything is wrong
- Feelings of worthlessness or helplessness
- Isolating or withdrawing from friends and family
- Decreased interest or enjoyment in activities you used to like
- Significant changes in usual sleeping or eating habits (such as sleeping more or eating less)

1/5

## #ByTheNumbers:

Around **one in five** teens and young adults (ages 12-18) have some kind of mental health condition



**Sound familiar? Have a talk with your parent or guardian, teacher, school counselor or any trusted adult about depression.**

# Teens and Young Adults:

# AT RISK

## Did you know your brain doesn't stop developing until your mid-20s?

This is one reason why teens and young adults may be at greater risk for stress-related mental conditions like depression and anxiety. Combine that with all the physical, emotional, and social changes that young people experience and you have a recipe for risk.

When it comes to mental health conditions, cut yourself some slack! You aren't done growing yet.

**2.3**  
MILLION

### #ByTheNumbers:

Approximately **2.3 million** teens and young adults have experienced some kind of impairment due to depression (meaning it has impacted their daily lives)

## Mental Health is Seriously Important

Take your mental health seriously. If you feel like you or someone you know may be experiencing signs of mental illness like depression, there's no time like the present to talk to a trusted adult (like a parent, teacher, guidance counselor, or doctor) about what you can do to get help.

# **SUBSTANCE USE MAKES THINGS WORSE**

Many teens and young adults face social pressures to engage in substance use. This can often be a slippery slope to addiction in anyone, but for those with a mental illness like depression, substance use can become a serious problem.

Drugs (including alcohol) and mental illness impact the same parts of the brain. People with existing mental illnesses can quickly become addicted to the drug's effects and eventually have to consume more and more to get the same high. This can lead to serious long-term health problems and can even be fatal.

***If you're suffering from a mental illness, avoiding drugs and alcohol can be lifesaving.***



If you are dealing with mental health issues and/or substance abuse problems, it's never too early to reach out to someone who can help. Talk to your parents, doctor, teacher, or guidance counselor and share how you're feeling. Check out the last page of this magazine for organizations that can help.

**TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR WELLBEING  
STAY DRUG & ALCOHOL FREE**

# STRUGGLING WITH SELF-HARM

While it may seem obvious from the name, **"self-harm"** is officially defined as causing intentional injury to your body without the end goal of suicide. Self-harm doesn't look the same for everyone and can sometimes be difficult to spot. If you're concerned that a friend may be self-harming, be on the lookout for any of these potential signs:

- Cuts or scars on arms, legs, and/or stomach
- Suspicious injuries or no explanations for injuries
- Wearing clothes that cover their arms/legs in situations that are unusual (such as wearing a sweatshirt in the summer)
- Finding sharp objects like razor blades or glass shards in their belongings

# Self-Harm... Coping Gone Wrong

Engaging in self-harm often seems confusing and difficult to understand, but people who self-harm usually do so for many reasons:

- As a way to cope with difficult emotions
- To ease anxiety
- To relieve angry feelings
- To get help from or show distress to others
- To escape feelings of numbness (e.g. to feel something)

While engaging in self-harm doesn't always indicate a mental illness, having a mental illness increases the chances of people self-harming. Sharing your concerns with an understanding teacher or counselor can go a long way towards helping someone overcome the urge to self-harm.

**17**  
PERCENT

## #ByTheNumbers:

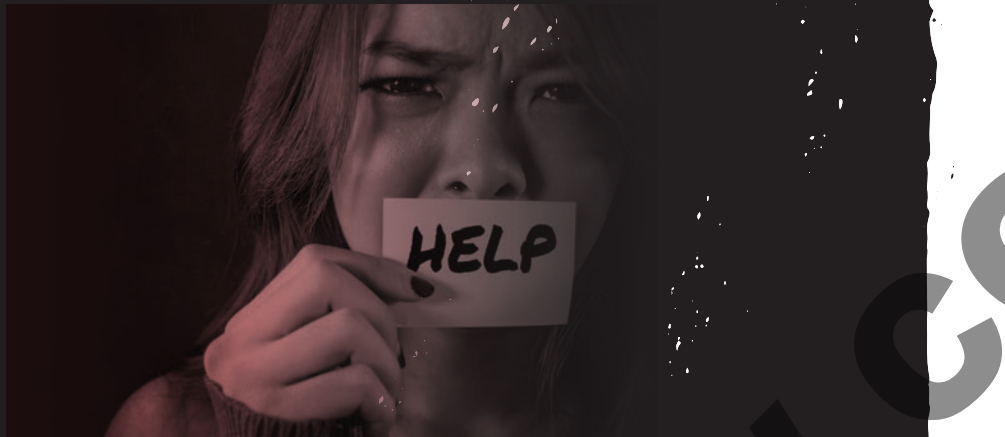
Studies have found that approximately **17 percent** of adolescents have admitted to self-harming in their lifetime.

***It's important to be supportive if you believe a friend or loved one may be self-harming.***

# #RealTalk: **Suicide**

## When Everything Feels Like it's Too Much

Suicide is when someone dies on purpose. This tragic event is something no one should have to experience, but it unfortunately happens too often to families and communities every day.



Suicide is the second leading cause of death among people 15-24. Approximately **one out of every 15 high school students** reports attempting suicide each year. One out of every 53 high school students reports having made a suicide attempt that was serious enough to be treated by a doctor or a nurse.

**For each suicide death among young people, there may be as many as 100 to 200 suicide attempts.**

## What are the signs?

People who are suicidal may show signs of how much they are suffering and what they are thinking of doing.



Think about someone you know who may be acting differently lately and ask yourself if they have been showing any of these signs:

INTENSE HOPELESSNESS OR SADNESS

PREOCCUPATION WITH DEATH

LOSS OF INTEREST IN REGULAR ACTIVITIES

WITHDRAWAL FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS

GIVING AWAY VALUED POSSESSIONS

TALKING ABOUT WHAT IT WILL BE LIKE WHEN THEY ARE GONE



# ***DON'T WAIT! REACH OUT!***

If you know of someone who is showing these signs, it's important to reach out to them and offer whatever help you can. This could look like putting them in touch with a counselor or therapist, or even just being a supportive friend. It might be uncomfortable to talk about, but isn't that worth someone's life?

***Being upfront and asking specific questions shows you care.***

**These include:**

- Are you feeling sad or depressed?
- Are you thinking about hurting or killing yourself?
- Have you **ever** thought about hurting or killing yourself?

Rather than putting thoughts in their head, these questions can let them know that somebody cares and is there to support them. Remember that you can change someone's mind before they act on their thoughts.

## ***What if it's me?***

If you are having suicidal thoughts, please reach out to someone now! You might feel like no one cares or that you can't talk to anyone about how you feel, but there are resources available to help you. Reach out to a trusted adult in your life: a teacher, parent, guidance counselor, neighbor, relative, or doctor. If you're unsure who you can talk to, there are national hotlines with trained professionals standing by to help.

***Remember that feelings can change, and that you deserve to give yourself a chance to survive and thrive.***

# BE THE SOLUTION

## NOT the Problem



### #NoBullying

When it comes to discussions of depression and suicide, it's important to talk about some of the social pressures that can make these issues worse. One of the most common problems teens and young adults face is bullying.

While depression is a complex condition with no single cause, studies have shown that bullying can make depression worse. People who are bullied are also more likely to consider suicide.

**When you consider the consequences of bullying, it's clear that speaking out against it is a good thing.**



### #SaySomething

When it comes to bullying, be part of the solution. Speak up when you see it happening and don't tolerate it if you know friends who are doing it. Many schools already have or are developing zero-tolerance bullying policies, and you can be part of the solution by reporting bullying when you see it happening.

# Virtual Bullying, Real-life Consequences



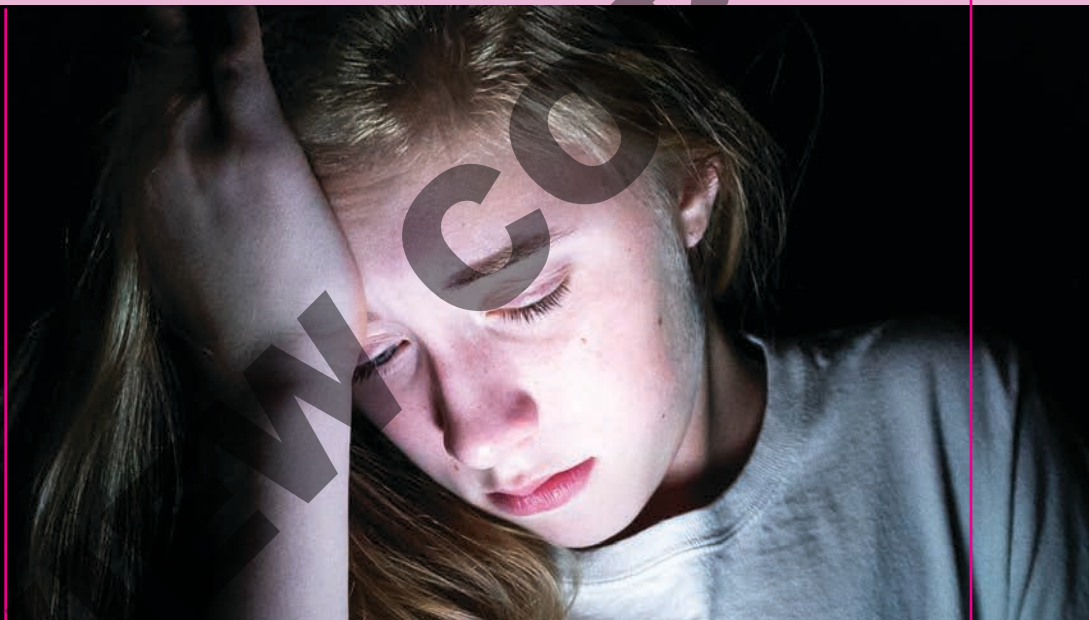
There's always a new app or social media site giving people the chance to connect. With these huge platforms, there's more exposure to negativity, and the opportunity to bully. This is called "**cyberbullying**," and just because it's not taking place in real-life doesn't mean that the harm isn't real.

Being online can give people the feeling of anonymity, and since they can't actually see the reaction their words cause, can actually make them act more hurtful.

## Some common cyberbullying tactics include:

- Posting mean or hurtful comments or rumors about someone online
- Threatening to hurt someone or telling them to kill themselves
- Posting a mean or hurtful picture or video
- Pretending to be someone else online to trick someone
- Creating mean or hurtful groups or websites about someone

If you know someone being cyberbullied, reach out and offer them your support. If you're being cyberbullied, report the behavior to a teacher or trusted adult. Most schools' anti-bullying policies include cyberbullying, and so it can be reported just like in-person bullying.



**36**  
PERCENT

### #ByTheNumbers:

An estimated **36 percent** of middle and high school students have been the victim of cyberbullying in their lifetime.

**No one deserves to be bullied. Everyone, no matter who they are, deserves the opportunity to be themselves and thrive.**

# **NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED OF**

## **Fighting the Stigma**

Stigma involves negative feelings, attitudes, or stereotypes about something. When it comes to mental health issues and suicide, people still face a great deal of stigma from society and sometimes even close friends and family.

The stigma that struggling people face can cause feelings of isolation, fear, embarrassment, and shame, and can even make them not want to seek help.

It's not just those suffering with mental health conditions or thoughts of suicide that are impacted by stigma. People who have experienced loss from suicide can also have feelings of guilt and embarrassment about their loved ones.

## **Myth VS. Facts**

Part of the reason why there is so much stigma around mental health conditions is that there are a ton of myths about what it really means. Because mental health is so misunderstood, it can make having conversations about it that much harder. You may have heard, or even still believe, some of the myths on the next page. Learning the facts is the first step towards fighting, and ending, the stigma of mental health conditions.

# The only way to dispel harmful myths is by fighting fiction with fact.



**Myth:** No one I know has a mental health condition.

**Fact:** Almost one in every five people suffer with some kind of mental health condition. Chances are you know someone who does, even if you don't know about it.

**Myth:** People with mental health conditions are bad students/employees.

**Fact:** Just as with any health condition, with proper treatment people who suffer with mental health conditions lead normal and productive lives.

**Myth:** People with mental health conditions never get better.

**Fact:** The right treatment is very important for anyone with a health condition, and up to 90 percent of people who receive proper treatment show reduction in symptoms and improved quality of life.

**Myth:** Only adults have to deal with mental health conditions.

**Fact:** Hopefully by reading this magazine, you know by now that this is not true! People of any age can struggle with mental health conditions, and it is just as common in young people as it is in adults (approximately 20 percent for both groups).

**Myth:** People with mental health conditions are violent.

**Fact:** Only three to five percent of violent acts are attributed to people with mental health conditions.

**Myth:** Mental health issues are caused by personality or character flaws. They can "snap out of it" if they tried harder.

**Fact:** Mental health conditions have nothing to do with having a flawed character, or with being lazy or weak. Lots of factors contribute to mental health conditions, including family history, life experiences, and biology.



**Combating the stigma around mental health conditions starts with having the conversation about their impact.**

# TALK TO A PROFESSIONAL

**Think you're suffering from a mental health condition?**

**Talk to a mental health professional.** They can assess your situation and make the best recommendation about what to do next. This may include seeing a therapist, medication, or some combination of the two.

Being an advocate for yourself and others can help save lives and improve the quality of living for those suffering from mental health conditions. Discuss mental health openly with family and friends to help end the negative stigma surrounding mental health and stand up for those who are struggling.

# Resources For Help

## Getting Immediate Help in a Crisis

If you or someone you know is in a crisis and in need of immediate help, you shouldn't hesitate to call 9-1-1.

**Here are other resources you can use in times of mental health crisis:**

- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** – Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

*The Lifeline is a free, confidential crisis hotline that is available to everyone 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Lifeline connects callers to the nearest crisis center in the Lifeline national network. These centers provide crisis counseling and mental health referrals.*

- **Crisis Text Line** – Text "HELLO" to 741741

*The Crisis Text hotline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week throughout the U.S. The Crisis Text Line serves anyone, in any type of crisis, connecting them with a crisis counselor who can provide support and information.*

**Please, do not hesitate to seek help for yourself or those you love. Reaching out could save a life.**

**YOU HAVE  
VALUE.**

**YOU  
MATTER.**

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