

# YOUNG MINDS

The voice for young people's mental health and wellbeing

CHILDREN AND  
YOUNG PEOPLE  
GET DEPRESSED TOO

# DEPRESSED?

**WE ALL FEEL DEPRESSED SOMETIMES.**

ALL OF US HAVE TO FACE DISAPPOINTMENT AND DEAL WITH THINGS GOING WRONG. ALL OF US MOURN THE LOSS OF PEOPLE AND ANIMALS WE HAVE LOVED OR FEEL SAD, FED UP OR HELPLESS SOMETIMES.

**PARENTS HELPLINE**  
**0808 802 5544**  
Lines open 9.30 – 4 Mon – Fri

## **DO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE GET DEPRESSED TOO?**

**Yes - if anything, more so than adults. They are more dependent, vulnerable and more sensitive to what is happening to them and around them. They care deeply about:**

- Losing their parents - whether because of divorce or separation, or through death
- Not being loved or listened to, feeling left out
- Losing their pets or favourite toys or possessions
- Changing school, moving home, losing friends

### **They worry about:**

- Their parents arguing or becoming depressed
- Their bodies, getting ill, being abnormal
- Sex
- Exams, not doing well or
- Being bullied
- Being abused physically, sexually, emotionally

NO ADVANCE TO... THIS FRIDAY! COST ENTRY 12:30



Nearly

80,000

children and young people suffer from severe depression

## BABIES AND TODDLERS TOO?

Babies and toddlers show their feelings in other ways. They are quick to pick up the mood those around them and may become fretful, clingy - unable to settle to sleep if they are worried. They can have nightmares, or become withdrawn and unresponsive, or go off their food. Sometimes their general development slows down and there may be toilet training problems like bed wetting.

## WHEN SHOULD WE BE WORRIED ABOUT A CHILD?

School-age children who are very depressed can find it hard to concentrate and may lose interest in work and play. Some may even refuse to go to school, while others complain of feeling bored or lonely, even when they have friends.

Some children become irritable and difficult to control, others lose confidence. Some children can talk about feeling unhappy, but others are only able to show how they feel through their behaviour. Many children blame themselves if things go wrong. A child who is feeling bad may do things that lead to them being punished, for example, by being disruptive, stealing or not going to school.



## WHEN SHOULD WE BE WORRIED ABOUT A TEENAGER?

Teenagers are often moody and uncommunicative. This is part of normal adolescence. However, some teenagers get stuck - they seem to get overwhelmed by despair. The following are some of the signs to watch out for:

- Being extremely moody and irritable
- Giving up interests but not finding new ones
- Losing interest or not doing well at school or work, and finding it hard to concentrate
- Becoming withdrawn and losing touch with friends
- Not looking after themselves
- Not eating enough or eating too much
- Being very self-critical
- Sleeping badly or sleeping too much

Some teenagers may express or escape from these feelings and thoughts through acting recklessly - taking drugs, drinking too much or getting into dangerous situations. Teenagers who are very depressed can become preoccupied with thoughts of death. They may attempt to kill or harm themselves (for example, by taking an overdose or cutting their arms).

## HOW CAN WE HELP?

**Children and young people need a caring adult or family member to help them understand and deal with their feelings over time. If not their problems can become worse and affect the rest of their lives. If they don't want to talk to someone they know, telephone helplines offer confidential support (see 'further sources of help' section at the end of this leaflet).**

- **Listen**
- **Take them seriously**
- **Be encouraging**
- **Offer help but don't react if they reject it – they may take it at a later time.**

If you suspect a child or young person's unhappiness is more than a passing phase, getting professional help early on can avoid the problems of long-term depression. It is always useful to contact your GP first of all, they can discuss the different kinds of help available and refer you to a specialist if necessary. Some doctors have counsellors on their staff.

There is a lot that can be done to help children and young people who show signs of feeling very depressed. Different kinds of individual and family therapy can be helpful. Medication is sometimes useful, but only for those who are seriously depressed and only after other forms of help have been tried.

### **FURTHER SOURCES OF HELP**

**YoungMinds Parents Helpline: 0808 802 5544**  
**Mon – Fri 9.30am – 4.00pm.**

For anyone who is worried about the emotional problems or behaviour of a child or person. Advisors can help you with more information, including specialist services and offer a call back with a specialist.

**YoungMinds Parents Forum:** [www.shareyourstory.org.uk](http://www.shareyourstory.org.uk)

YoungMinds also produces a range of booklets specifically for young people, including one entitled do you ever feel depressed? Check out our website at [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

## CHILDLINE

Helpline:..... 0800 1111  
Textphone: ..... 0800 400 222  
Mon – Fri 9.30am – 9.30pm & 11am – 8pm Weekends  
Living away from home: ..... 0800 88 44 44  
Mon – Fri 3.30pm – 9.30pm & 11am – 8pm Weekends  
Website: ..... [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

ChildLine is the UK's free helpline for children and young people. It provides a confidential telephone counselling service for any child with any problem. It comforts, advises and protects.

## SAMARITANS

Chris, PO Box 9090, Stirling Fk8 2SA  
Helpline UK & NI:..... 08457 90 90 90  
Helpline Republic of Ireland:.. 1850 60 90 90  
Textphone: ..... 08457 90 91 92  
Email: ..... [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)  
Website: ..... [www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

Confidential emotional support for anyone who is in crisis

## MIND

MindinfoLine: ..... 0845 766 0163  
Website: ..... [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

Mind supports parents and helps people take control of their mental health. They provide high quality information and advice, and campaign to promote and protect good mental health for everyone.

