



# **YOUNG**MiNDS

## **Depression and your child**

**Your guide to the signs and  
helping them find support**



**80,000**

Nearly 80,000 children and young people suffer from depression in the UK.



[youngminds.org.uk/depression](https://youngminds.org.uk/depression)

# Children can be depressed too...

Some people think depression is an adult condition. But it's also common in children and young people.

People often say they are 'feeling depressed' about something, but this doesn't mean they have depression.

Depression is a diagnosable disorder where a person's mood is 'down' over a long period of time and this affects their everyday life. It can affect everyone - children at school and teenagers at college, university, in work or not in work, training or education.

In this leaflet you'll find information on how depression affects children of different ages, the signs to look out for and how you can help.

# Why do young people get depressed?

Being a young person today can be tough as they face the worries of growing up, school, making friends, getting an apprenticeship or job and handling home life.

Here are some of the common things that cause young people to become depressed:

- Losing their parents through death, separation or divorce
- Feeling they are not being loved or listened to
- Bereavement and loss
- Changing school or moving home
- Their parents arguing
- A parent or family member suffering from a mental or physical illness
- Their changing bodies

- Unemployment, job loss and redundancy
- Sex
- Exam pressures
- Being bullied
- Being abused whether sexually, mentally or physically

There are times when young people can't identify an event or incident after they become depressed and it can also run in families.



# Depression in young children

When children reach school age, they're more able to talk about their feelings. Some will talk about feeling upset while others might only show it through their actions.

If you think your child might be suffering from depression, here are a few things to look out for:

- Crying a lot
- Feeling sad or angry
- Losing interest in school or refusing to go
- Feeling bored or lonely even though they have friends
- Becoming irritable and hard to manage
- Difficulty sleeping alone
- Being disruptive
- Stealing things

# 1 in 10

people will be diagnosed with  
depression at some point in  
their lives



# Depression in teens

The most common age group to experience depression are teens as they are going through a lot of changes in their lives.

A little bit of moodiness or being uncommunicative is to be expected in teens. But sometimes they become stuck and overwhelmed by despair.

Some of the symptoms of depression in teens include:

- Extreme moodiness and irritability
- Giving up interests and not finding new ones
- Losing interest in school and having trouble concentrating
- Becoming withdrawn and isolated
- Not looking after their personal hygiene
- Not eating enough or eating too much
- Oversleeping or not sleeping enough



Some teens try to find ways of coping with their feelings which can lead to anger, lying, stealing or reckless behaviour with alcohol or drugs.

In extreme cases they may turn to self-harm as a release or even attempt suicide as an escape.



# What can you do to help?

If you're worried about a child and think they might be suffering from depression, getting help early is essential.

It can prevent the problem from developing into long-term depression.

The first step is to **talk to them and try to understand their feelings.**

Be patient – they may not open up straight away and they may reject your help at first. But keep trying, stay open minded and keep being positive and encouraging.

Don't blame yourself.

Once they've accepted your support, you can help them get professional advice to tackle it.



# Getting professional advice

It's best to contact your GP first – they can help you determine the best way to treat the problem. You can go by yourself to your GP about your child or young person.

**They'll most likely suggest therapy first** – this can take many forms such as group talking therapy, one-to-one counselling sessions or even counselling where you join your child and a therapist.



If your child's depression is quite serious, your GP may also suggest prescribing anti-depressants; however, they are most likely to make a referral to the CAMHS service to advise on this.

Antidepressants are usually a last resort with children and is only tried when other forms of support like talking therapy haven't worked.

Pastoral care is accessible in all schools and colleges, so you may also want to contact them for support as well as your GP so all avenues are being covered.



# Where to go for help



[youngminds.org.uk/depression](https://www.youngminds.org.uk/depression)

## youngminds.org.uk

Support and advice for parents worried about a child or young person.

**Helpline:** 0808 802 5544

*Mon-Fri 9:30am – 4pm*

---



## mind.org.uk

Mind supports adults and parents with a mental health problem.

**Helpline:** 0300 123 3393

---

## sane.org.uk

Emotional support to anyone affected by mental health problems, including families, friends and carers.

**Helpline:** 0845 767 8000

*6pm – 11pm*

---





YoungMinds  
Fourth Floor, India House  
45 Curlew Street  
London SE1 2ND  
**Telephone** 020 7089 5050

[yomenquiries@youngminds.org.uk](mailto:yomenquiries@youngminds.org.uk)

**[youngminds.org.uk](http://youngminds.org.uk)**



**LOTTERY FUNDED**

Registered charity number: 1016968

Company limited by guarantee number: 02780643

Thank you to Dr Andrea Gnanadurai and her colleagues at the Child and Family Public Engagement Board, Royal College of Psychiatry for fact checking this booklet.