

Chapter 5 Lesson 1: Dealing with Anxiety and Depression

Introduction:

What would you do if a friend told you he or she was thinking about suicide, but made you promise not to tell anyone else? You might think that your friend was just dealing with normal feelings of anxiety or sadness, problems that everyone experiences at one time or another. However, when these feelings become overwhelming or last a long time, it is time to seek help. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) has written a special guide for teens, so they can identify possible depression in their friends...or even themselves.

Links to Explore:

What To Do When A Friend Is Depressed: Guide For Students

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/friend.cfm>

Directions

- Click on the NIMH link and read the fact sheet on depression in teens.
 - Then answer the following questions:
1. Your friend tells you he or she is feeling down in the dumps. When is it time for him or her to check whether clinical depression is the cause?
 2. Identify three factors that may contribute to clinical depression.
 3. What percentage of teens experience depression in any given year?
 4. List three warning signs of depression.
 5. What can you do to help a depressed friend?
 6. What should you do if a friend talks about suicide or has frequent thoughts of death?

Answers:

1. When the down mood lasts more than two weeks
2. Any three of the following:
 - A genetic predisposition
 - Difficult life experiences
 - Difficulty handling stress
 - Low self-esteem
 - Extreme pessimism about the future
3. 3 to 5 percent
4. Any three of the following:
 - Feelings of sadness or emptiness
 - Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism, or guilt
 - Feelings of helplessness or worthlessness
 - Inability to make decisions
 - Inability to concentrate and remember
 - Loss of interest in favorite activities

- Increased problems with school and family
- Loss of energy and drive
- Disturbed sleep patterns
- Appetite problems
- Headaches, stomachaches, or backaches
- Chronic aches and pains
- Restlessness or irritability
- Avoiding other people
- Cutting classes or dropping activities and hobbies
- Heavy drinking or drug use
- Talking about death or suicide
- A suicide attempt

5. Listen and encourage him or her to seek treatment.

6. Tell a trusted adult right away.

Additional Links to Explore:

Use the links below to gather additional information on the activity topic. When appropriate, have students extend their research to include important concepts contained in these Web sites.

Teen Suicide

<http://www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/suicide.htm>

Depression: A Treatable Illness

<http://menanddepression.nimh.nih.gov/infopage7429.html?ID=15>