



DEPRESSION CREATES MOMENTS LIKE THIS

A booklet for teens

Credits

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“There actually ARE people who can help you, as strange as it sounds. I still remember the time when I couldn't sleep at all because the thoughts were taking over my head. Remember that you CAN get help.” Frank, 13

TRUE OR FALSE?

Try these true or false questions, before you read the rest of the information. When you reach the answers on page 8, check back here to see how much you knew and how much you have learned.

T **F** “It’s normal for teens to be moody. Teens don’t suffer from ‘real’ depression.”

T **F** “I’m just weak... there’s nothing that can be done to help me.”

T **F** “If I were depressed, I would be thinking about suicide.”

T **F** “Talking about how I feel will only make it worse.”

T **F** “No one else could understand how I feel.”

T **F** “I must have done something wrong to make me feel this way.”

BREAKING IT DOWN



Life isn't easy, especially when you're a teen. Parents, teachers, friends—everyone expects so much from you, including yourself. It can be really overwhelming.

It's during their teens that many people start to show signs of depression. The problem is, it's not easy to recognize and it can be even harder to talk about. Teens that have depression don't always get help.

There are a lot of reasons why depressed teens don't ask for help. One big reason is that teens are afraid of how others will react and how they will be treated after others find out.

The good news is, it doesn't have to be that way for you or your friends. **There are lots of people you can count on for help, and it's nothing to be ashamed of.**

Take the first step in breaking down the barriers that could be keeping you and other teens from getting help.

If you flip this book over, you'll find information on how to make growing up a little easier.

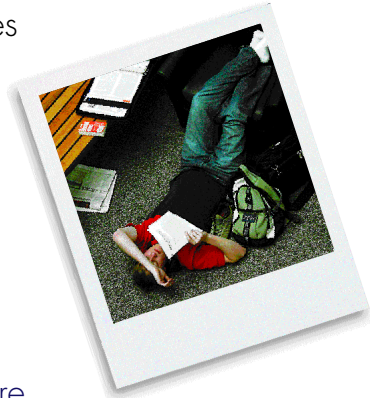
16 year old male: "depression has a mind of its own—it takes up all your positive thoughts and turns them negative and takes your smiles away."

Only about 6 per cent of Nova Scotia teens have ever talked to a "mental health professional."

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Feeling down. It's part of life. Sometimes though, the blues hang around longer than a few days. When this happens, it can keep you from doing the things you enjoy.

In Nova Scotia, almost 1 in 10 teens between the ages of 12 and 19 say they have been sad or blue persistently for at least two weeks. This is one sign of "clinical" depression.



Clinical depression is more than the blues, it's a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness. It's not something you can get out of by trying hard.

The good news is, there is help out there. Things can get better. If you're feeling depressed, you're not alone. It can happen to anyone.

WHY?

There are many reasons why depression affects some people more severely than others. The risk factors include:

- low self esteem
- family changes
- stress at home or school
- loss of someone or something that you love
- abuse
- family members with mental health problems

"For anyone who is really depressed, talk to someone and remember there is a brighter side." John, 14

SIGNS

How do you know when it's more than the blues?

You may be depressed if you:

- feel tired all the time
- don't want to do things you enjoy
- feel angry and grumpy
- feel worthless, hopeless, or guilty
- aren't sleeping well or aren't eating well
- are unable to concentrate
- are having trouble making decisions
- are not doing as well in school

If these types of things have been happening to you for more than two weeks straight, talk to someone you trust.

If you don't get the help you need and deserve, these feelings will continue.

It's not hopeless. Depression can be treated, and you can get back to feeling like yourself.

Other signs that you might be dealing with depression include using drugs, using alcohol, or smoking.

Can you think of other things that might cause you to become sad or depressed?

Make a list of people you could talk to and what you might do to deal with problems—then when they happen, you're prepared.

Yvette says : "If I knew then what I know now about depression, I would have saved myself a lot of grief. I would have gotten help sooner."



SELF-HARM

Self-harm is a way of dealing with very difficult feelings.

Self-harm is something that anyone dealing with depression might do, if they felt it was the only way to stop the pain. For more information on self-harm, check out: www.selfharm.org.uk or www.selfinjury.org

"If you have something wrong, just tell an adult and they can help sometimes. Talk to someone older. It makes you feel better". Eileen, 13

SUICIDE

The signs of suicide look a lot like depression. Most people who are depressed don't commit suicide. Someone thinking about suicide might say things like:



"I won't be a problem much longer."

"Nothing matters"

"I won't see you again."

Other things teens might do:

- give away favorite possessions
- clean out their room
- throw things away
- become cheerful after a period of depression
- take unusual risks

Self-harm and suicide aren't things we like to talk about, but knowing how to recognize the signs can make getting help easier.

GETTING HELP

Getting help for depression can be as easy as talking to someone you trust, like a friend, a

teacher, or your parents. Other places to find help: talk to someone you trust—friend,

teacher, parent, doctor, counsellor, social worker, religious leader, nurse, brother, or sister.

KIDS HELP LINE 1-800-668-6868

or kidshelp.sympatico.ca

YOUTH HELP LINE 1-800-420-8336

Youth health centre (many communities in NS have one)

Your local health services

TOP 5 REASONS TO GET HELP:

Enjoy your friends

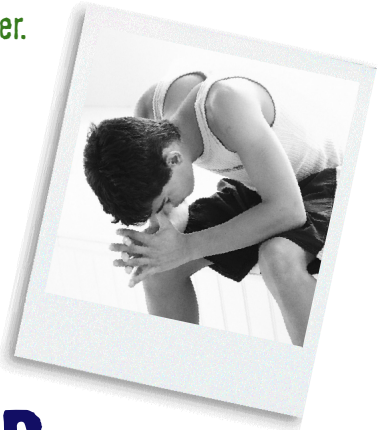
Feel rested

Stop feeling cranky

Improve relationships

Have energy

If a person doesn't understand, talk to someone else!



GETTING BETTER

There are different ways to get feeling better. Everyone's experience of depression is different, and different types of treatment work better for some people than they do for others. The most important thing is that you get feeling better.

Therapy or Counselling: A number of different types of counselling are used to treat depression.

Medication: Medications are sometimes used to treat depression in teens.

GIVING HELP

When you think a friend is depressed, it's hard to know what to do. There is no secret to helping someone who is depressed, just be a good friend:

- help them look for help
- tell someone you trust
- listen
- be patient with them
- don't put down or tease them
- learn more about depression

"I really didn't like to do it, but I had a heart-to-heart talk with my dad and he understood. MY solution was talking to someone; that made me feel a whole lot better." Gina, 14



TRUTH

Remember the true and false questions on the first page? It should be clear now that all those statements were false.



- Depression can affect people of any age, sex, race, or culture—ANYONE, including teens.
- Depression affects many people, and there is help available.
- Being depressed and thinking about suicide are not the same.
- You can be depressed without suicide ever crossing your mind.
- Everyone gets depressed, so many people will relate to how you feel.
- There are many reasons why people get depressed, and those reasons are usually out of your control.

SEARCH

Want more information? Check out these websites:

Canadian Mental Health Association (Nova Scotia)

www.cmhans.org

Teen Health Website

www.chebucto.ns.ca/Health/TeenHealth

Laing House

www.lainghouse.org

*Websites referred to in this publication were appropriate at time of printing.

Shadows

I am walking in the shadows
And the darkness falls on me.
I can't see through that darkness
Like the forest for the trees
I can't hear the thoughts I'm thinking
For the thoughts others are speaking
I am living and I'm not dead
And I often wondered why instead
I'm on the outskirts and I'm watching
My dream of family that's unfolding
Others they are living it
Not me I'm not a part of it
I'm an outcast of their hearts
In my dream I have no part
I'm a ghost that's in the shadows
And I wonder if they know I'm here.
There are no pieces to pick up this time
Just myself from off the bottom
Of shattered dreams, relationships
Too many broken empty promises
But I will pick myself up again.
And yes, I will go on,
To a semblance of a life that's mine
Perhaps in You, God
All will work for good in time.

Susan Weldon

Consumer, Mental Health Advocate



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University of Texas at Austin Counseling and Mental Health Centre

Utah Education Network

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BUILDING IT UP

The best years of your life



That's what they say your teen years are.

You're too busy to have fun—sports teams, music lessons, family responsibilities, your job, school, homework, friends—the list goes on.

This side of the booklet contains information on different ways to cope with some of the things life will throw your way. You'll also have the chance to think about what makes you happy and get some ideas about things you can do when life gets stressful or you are feeling down.

Not taking time for yourself and having some fun would be a big mistake. Not doing those types of things every now and then could increase the chance that you will suffer from depression.

Laughing, eating well, being positive, and having fun with your friends and family are just some of the things known to improve your mental health.

KNOW YOURSELF

It starts with you. You can't control everything in your life. No one can. But there are things you can do to prepare for harder times.

The most important thing you can do is know who you are.

Ask yourself:

- What's important to me?
- What am I good at?
- What do I like to do?
- What do I want for the future?
- What makes me angry?
- How do I react when I get stressed out or angry?

No one else can tell you these things. Thinking about the answers to these questions is the first step in protecting yourself.

An esteemed concept

Self-concept is how you see yourself. Thinking about your strengths and unique qualities, rather than your weaknesses and failures, makes you feel better about yourself and can make it easier to deal with tough situations. Self-esteem is how you feel about yourself and the value you give yourself.

If you feel good about yourself, you will be more confident and not be so hard on yourself.



Try to set goals and work towards them. Focus on your strengths. Understand your feelings. Be positive. Learn from mistakes.

PROTECT YOURSELF

You can't expect other people to take care of you. Other people can help you out, but they can't make you feel good about yourself.

Taking care of your mental health is like putting your seat belt on or looking before you cross the street.

What can you do?

Check out these things that can protect you from getting down and help you feel good about yourself and your future:

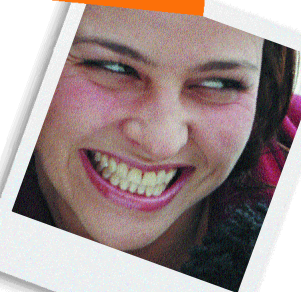
- eat healthy food
- try to work well with others
- be positive
- take care of your body
- be involved in your community
- solve everyday problems
- be open to new or different situations

What are some other things you could do?

Doing those things sounds easy, but when you think about it, they can be hard to do. It takes time and practice, and it helps when you have someone to support you.

The next time you have a school project, ask a friend to work with you. That way you can practice working in a team, solving problems, and learning to be flexible when things come up that you didn't count on.

Try writing a letter to yourself. Write down things you like about yourself and what makes you happy.



CHOOSE



The secret to dealing with life is knowing what is important to you.

Having an idea of what some of those things are may make it easier for you to make decisions. And you will be more likely to feel good about the choices you've made.

You make a lot of decisions each day—some big, some small. But, when you're faced with a decision that you haven't made before, try this out:

1. What's the problem?
2. What are your choices? Think about the options, and outcomes.
3. Choose an option.
4. Make an action plan.
5. Carry out the decision.
6. Evaluate the problem and your solution.

Try it out...

You have a math test tomorrow. You did well on the last test, but have been having trouble with this chapter.

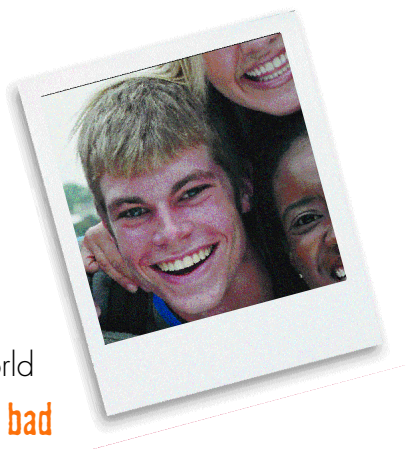
Your friend calls you up and asks you to play video games tonight.

What would you do?

4.

Feeling pressured?
Can't keep up with everything?
Maybe you should think about concentrating on just a couple of things you really enjoy.
You probably don't need to be on the basketball team and in the band. Choose one.
It's your life!

THINK DIFFERENT



It's awesome that everyone sees the world differently. **If you're only seeing all the bad things in your world though, that's going to make you feel bad about yourself.**

The next time you're feeling bad about yourself, try thinking about the "up" side.

Negative

"I got an F on that test. I'm such an idiot"

"That presentation was awful. I should have worked on it harder."

"My friends are all busy. Nobody likes me."

Positive

"I did well on the first test. Maybe I should study a bit more or get some help"

"Everyone seems to have liked my presentation. It wasn't perfect, but I worked hard on it. I'm proud of myself."

"All my friends are busy today. We'll do something tomorrow."

Think it through... You walk into the cafeteria at lunch and your friends don't notice you. What do you think? They didn't see you come in, or they are ignoring you?

RELAX

Try these easy stress relievers to help you relax when you get stressed.

Deep breathing technique:

Focusing on your lower belly, breath in slowly and deeply through your nostrils. Hold a few seconds and slowly exhale through your mouth. Repeat 5 to 10 times.

Ear to Shoulder:

Lower your right ear to your right shoulder and hold for 10 seconds. Do the same on your left side.

Bubble technique:

Close your eyes and sit quietly. Imagine floating weightlessly in the air—no worries, no stress. Picture your thoughts being inside of air bubbles and watch them float away.

Be a friend

Being a friend means sharing and trusting. It means having fun and hanging out. It can also mean disagreeing and being hurt sometimes. Real friends who like you for you can be hard to find, but they're out there. Keep looking.



Signs that you are having fun...

You're laughing

You have lots of energy

You feel good about yourself

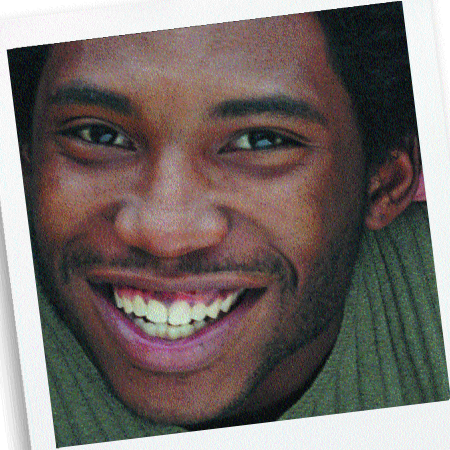
You caught yourself smiling

You've forgotten your troubles

You can't wait to do it again

SMILE

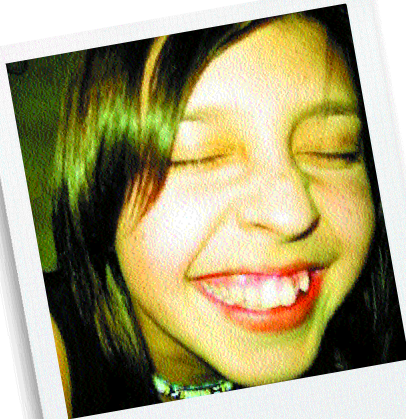
- A smile is the universal expression of happiness.
- Smiles are the most frequently used facial expressions.
- Smiling makes us feel better.
- We know how to smile at birth.
- Newborns prefer a smiling face over a non-smiling face.
- There are 18 different kinds of smiles.



A smiling person is judged to be more pleasant, attractive, sincere, sociable, and competent than a non-smiling person.

SO...

remember to think positively, set reasonable goals and make time to relax.



Emerging into the Light

I am stepping out of the dark shadows
I have seen the light
Past a people who thought they'd be
I look to God with single sight
I hear the beat of a different drum
A strong person I'll become
I no longer dream the dream
That once purposed my heart so strong
Too many things have changed it seems
So has the course of my many dreams
No longer the grievousness of an outcast
That now remains a part of the past
I'm taking centre place in my life
While others to the shadows fall
I no longer on others rely
For my happiness, but I
So I'm picking myself up from bottom
With no shame at all
The only shame and embarrassment
Is staying there, that's all
So I'm picking up the shattered pieces
And assembling them anew
To a new and better me
I take centre lead
Others play but a bit part
For it's my life and a new I start
There's always sadness
There's always sorrow
But it's with strength I look to tomorrow
For I consider this day a Gift
That's why we call it the Present
And this Day, this Gift, this Present
Is also mine, God given
Perhaps in You, God
All did work for Good in time
Even mine.

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