

You don't have to live with depression. Below are ways to find out if you are depressed and tips on how to get through difficult times. If you need help, call 1-800-LifeNet and talk to someone. All calls are strictly confidential.

DEPRESSION

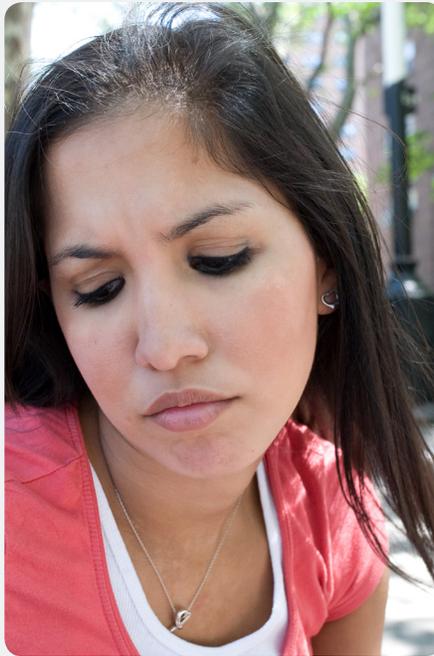
It's normal to feel sad, irritable or down now and then, but if these feelings don't go away or they become so bad that you can't handle them, you may be suffering from depression.

People experience depression in different ways. These are some common problems that teens with depression may have:

- You constantly feel sad, irritable or angry
- You feel hopeless or helpless
- Nothing seems like fun any more and you don't enjoy things that you normally do
- You have trouble concentrating, making decisions and thinking clearly
- You have no energy
- You feel bad about yourself, worthless and guilty
- You use alcohol or other drugs more
- You withdraw from friends and family or become very dependent on them
- You have no appetite or you overeat
- You've gained or lost weight without trying to
- You have trouble getting to sleep, wake up during the night or sleep longer than usual
- You have aches and pains and feel sick
- **You have thoughts about suicide or ending your life (if this happens, talk to an adult right away)**

If you're concerned that you're experiencing depression, see your local doctor or mental health professional.

If your feelings become so overwhelming that you can't see any solution besides harming yourself or others, you need to get help immediately.



What you can do to feel better

Depression is one of the most common emotional problems in the USA and it can be treated. Help is available. Treatment for depression can include psychotherapy (talk therapy), medication, or a combination of both.

Along with getting treatment for depression there are a few things you can do that may help when you are feeling depressed.

Eat Well and Be Active – Even though you might not feel like it, exercising and eating well can help when you feel down. Exercise helps stimulate hormones such as endorphins which help you feel better about yourself and your life. If you haven't done a lot of exercise before, start doing something small a couple of times each week.

Get Out into Nature – Research shows that when you have some sort of contact with nature (such as with pets, plants, gardens or parks) your mood improves and you feel less stressed. Even just going for a walk in the park or at the beach may help.

Write Down Your Feelings – Writing down your feelings or keeping a journal can be a great way of understanding your emotions and a specific situation. It can also help you think about alternative solutions to problems.

Take Time Out to Relax – Take a bit of time each day to do something you enjoy. When you feel down it can be hard to be social or motivate yourself to do things. Make a list of all the things you enjoy doing and then plan to do something from this list each day.

Talk to Someone – Although it may seem hard, sharing how you feel and hanging out with someone you trust can help you get through the hard times, see alternative ways of solving or thinking about a problem, and help to make you a happier person in general. If you're having trouble speaking about what you're going through, start with sentences such as "Right now, I'm feeling...", "I think it started when...", "I've been feeling this for...", "My sleep has been...", "Lately school/work/ life has been... "

Set Small Goals – Sometimes people set goals that are almost unachievable and then feel even worse when they cannot reach them. Try to set goals that are achievable for you, even if it's on a daily or hourly basis, and remember to reward yourself too.

Avoid Drugs and Alcohol – Try not to use drugs or alcohol in the hope of feeling better. The feeling is usually temporary. Alcohol and drugs actually often make the depression worse.

To learn more about issues facing NYC teens and how to deal with them visit www.nyc.gov/teen

Source:

Reach Out! (www.reachout.com.au) is a web based service that provides information, support and interactive features to help young people get through tough times.