



SOS: Signs of Suicide®

Parent Newsletter



Get Into the ACT®!

Just Moody or Something More?

Parenting an adolescent is no easy task. During the “tween” years, your child may experience physical and emotional changes that can be very difficult to handle. While a certain amount of moodiness is normal, prolonged sadness or irritability can be signs of depression.

Depression is more than just “the blues.” When untreated, it can be very serious and lead to school failure, alcohol abuse, and even suicide. Young people with depression may have a hard time coping with everyday activities and responsibilities, have difficulty getting along with others, and suffer from low self-esteem.

The good news about depression is that it is highly treatable, and as a concerned parent, there are many things you can do to help. Early identification, diagnosis, and treatment help children reach their full potential. By learning more about the signs and symptoms of depression, you will be better prepared to ACT® whenever your child needs you: Acknowledge that there is a problem, express that you Care, Tell someone and get help.



a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization



Has Your Child Told You About the SOS Signs of Suicide® Program?

The goal of the program is to help students identify signs of depression, self-injury, and suicide in themselves and others, and respond to them effectively. The main message of the program is ACT®

Acknowledge, Care, Tell:

- **Acknowledge** that you are seeing signs of depression, self-injury, or suicide in a friend and that it is serious.
- **Care**—let your friend know that you care about him or her, and that you are concerned that he or she needs help you cannot provide.
- **Tell** a trusted adult, either with your friend or on his or her behalf.

Talk to your child today about the importance of recognizing when there is a problem and how you can help them.



**Helping
Yourself
=
Helping
Your Child**

Being a parent is not easy; it takes personal strength and flexibility to bounce back in times of stress. Your ability to succeed, in spite of hard times and difficulties, shows your resiliency. As a parent you want to teach resiliency skills to your child. However, you must first understand how you solve problems in your own life in order to be an effective teacher.

Here are some questions to get you started:

- Where do you find the strength to deal with everyday problems?
- How does this help you in your parenting?
- Think of a time you coped well with a problem, what did you do?
- What would your friends and family say are your strongest qualities?
- What aspect of your parenting are you most proud of?
- How can you help your child build healthy coping skills?

No matter what we do to protect our children, problems will occur. Remember to focus on the positive, encourage optimism, and keep things in perspective—remind your child that things won't always be this way. By acknowledging and developing your own resiliency skills, you will be able to serve as a positive role model. In order for your child to bounce back from a difficult situation it is essential that they have a close relationship with at least one emotionally healthy adult in their life. As a parent, you can be the adult to help your child learn that they have the skills to be successful and overcome obstacles.



Recognizing Depression... Know What to Look For



The first step to helping your child is recognizing that there might be a problem. Teenage depression may not be noticed right away, the symptoms can be difficult to spot and confused with the normal trials and tribulations of growing up.

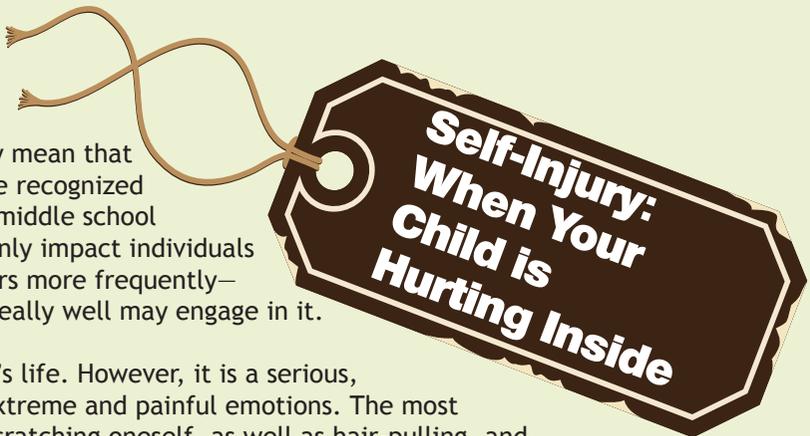
It is important to make a distinction between normal teenage moodiness and a more serious condition.

Signs & Symptoms of Depression

- Depressed mood (can be sad, down, grouchy, or irritable)
- Change in sleeping patterns, weight, and/or appetite
- Withdrawal from family or friends
- Feelings of worthlessness and/or hopelessness
- A decline in grades
- Obsession over body image
- An inability to complete simple tasks
- Drug and/or alcohol use or abuse
- Neglect of physical health/hygiene
- Thoughts of death, suicide, or wishes to be dead

Many teens are experiencing the above symptoms but that doesn't necessarily mean they're suffering from depression. However, if your child's behavior lasts for **more than two weeks**, it could be a sign that his/her troubles are more than a temporary slump. If you're unsure about your child's behavior, talk to your child's teacher, school counselor, or any other adult who has frequent contact with your child for their thoughts concerning her/his behavior. Also, consider talking to your pediatrician, a psychologist, or a psychiatrist for an opinion. Depression in children and teens, when left untreated, can lead to a number of other serious problems including drug and alcohol abuse, relationship problems, and even suicide.

Is your child purposely injuring their body? If so, this may mean that he or she is hurting inside. Self-injury has become a more recognized problem behavior among high school students, although middle school students exhibit this behavior as well. Once thought to only impact individuals with serious emotional disturbance, self-injury now occurs more frequently—even the child you think has it all together and is doing really well may engage in it.



Self-Injury: When Your Child is Hurting Inside

Self-injury is generally NOT about suicide, or ending one's life. However, it is a serious, destructive behavior that some teens use to cope with extreme and painful emotions. The most common examples are cutting, hitting, burning and/or scratching oneself, as well as hair-pulling, and picking existing wounds. The reasons a child self-injures are complicated, but generally it's done in an attempt to relieve their emotional distress.

What can you do to protect your child? First, the way you respond to self-injury can have a big impact on your child's recovery. Understandably, having a teen that self-injures can be very difficult, overwhelming, and frightening. You will need to educate yourself on self-injury, and the reasons why some young people feel the need to do this. Since most people can overcome self-injury with counseling, **the best thing you can do is seek professional treatment as soon as possible.**

Contributed by: Barent Walsh, Ph.D., author of *Treating Self-Injury: A Practical Guide*



Stop Think Click

Social Networking Sites...Quick Facts

While social networking sites can increase a person's circle of friends, they also can increase exposure to people with less than friendly intentions.

Here are tips for helping your kids use social networking sites safely:

- Help your kids understand what information should be private.
- Explain that kids should post only information that you—and they—are comfortable with others seeing.
- Use privacy settings to restrict who can access and post on your child's website.
- Remind your kids that once they post information online, they can't take it back.
- Talk to your kids about avoiding sex talk online.
- Tell your kids to trust their gut if they have suspicions. If they ever feel uncomfortable or threatened by anything online, encourage them to tell you.

For the full article go to: <http://www.onguardonline.gov/topics/social-networking-sites.aspx>

When Your Child Is Being Bullied

Bullying is emotional and/or physical abuse. Bullies intend to inflict harm—verbally, physically, and through intimidation (gestures and social exclusion). Boys and girls are both bullied; but boys are more likely to be physically hit and threatened, whereas girls are more likely to experience verbal taunts and social isolation.

Bullies seek out those who appear fearful, sad, or depressed. Kids that have low self-esteem, lack social skills, and have few friends are likely targets.

As a parent, it is natural to want to protect your child and keep them safe. Now, more than ever, parents must also empower their children with self-confidence and assertiveness. Teaching your child to respond to a bully assertively means having them “stand tall,” and respond—briefly and directly, using a strong, calm, loud, and confident voice and defending their rights—without name-calling or making threats. Role-playing is a great way to demonstrate these types of responses, and help your child practice the skills he/she needs to deal with a bully's tactics. Remind your child that they should not deal with a bully on their own. Emphasize that they should always tell a trusted adult and discuss who these individuals might be (i.e., teacher, counselor, parent, school nurse).

Source: K. Story, R. Slaby, M. Adler, J. Minotti, and R. Katz. (2008). *Eyes on Bullying...What Can You Do? A toolkit to prevent bullying in children's lives*. Retrieved from www.eyesonbullying.org/pdfs/toolkit.pdf



Many People Don't Know that Underage Alcohol Use...

Is a major cause of death from injuries among young people

Each year, approximately 5,000 people under the age of 21 die as a result of underage drinking; this includes about 1,900 deaths from motor vehicle crashes, 1,600 as a result of homicides, 300 from suicide, as well as hundreds from other injuries such as falls, burns, and drownings.

Increases the risk of carrying out, or being a victim of, a physical or sexual assault.

Can affect the body in many ways.

The effects of alcohol range from hangovers to death from alcohol poisoning.

Can lead to other problems.

These may include bad grades in school, run-ins with the law, and drug use.

Affects how well a young person judges risk and makes sound decisions.

For example, after drinking, a teen may see nothing wrong with driving a car or riding with a driver who has been drinking.

Plays a role in risky sexual activity.

This can increase the chance of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

Can harm the growing brain, especially when teens drink a lot.

Today we know that the brain continues to develop from birth through the teen years into the mid-20s.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General. (2007). The Surgeon General's *Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking: A Guide for Families*. Retrieved April 26, 2010, from <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/underagedrinking/FamilyGuide.pdf>



What is the Trevor Project?

A study published in *Pediatrics* found that the gay, lesbian, and bisexual young adults and teens at the highest risk of attempting suicide and experiencing other substantial mental health problems are those who reported a high level of rejection by their families because of their sexual orientation. As a result, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth are statistically up to nine times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers—an alarming and disturbing statistic.

In order to keep all children safe and supported, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, it is important for parents to create and foster a safe, accepting, and inclusive environment at home.

Looking for more information on how you can best support your child?

The Trevor Project operates The Trevor Helpline, which is a free and confidential service that offers someone to talk to for LGBTQ youth, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**To reach The Trevor Helpline please call:
866-4-U-TREVOR (866-488-7386)**

In addition to operating the crisis and suicide prevention helpline, The Trevor Project provides online support to young people and resources for parents and educators.

Visit: TheTrevorProject.org