

Turning a New Leaf

Could My Teen Be Depressed?

by LaSaundra Gordon, MA, LCPC, Child, Adolescent & Adult Therapist



Sixteen-year-old “Billy” is having a hard time in school. He is missing classes and his grades are suffering. He is unmotivated, withdrawn and very irritable. His parents are struggling to communicate with him and he is annoyed all the time. He spends a large amount of time alone in his room drawing and writing. His expressions are filled with hate, anger and rage. He has completely withdrawn from all his friends. He doesn’t seem to care about anything that used to be important to him.

If you have ever wondered if your child is just lazy and unsocial when he or she doesn’t want to hang out with friends anymore, you are not alone. People who are depressed are often perceived as lazy and withdrawn in part due to the lack of drive, motivation and the desire to be alone. The desire to be alone is a symptom that often comes from the thought that no one cares about or likes them, despite evidence to the contrary.

Often the biggest struggle is getting the teen, as well as their parents, to understand what is going on, what depression is, what it is not and what to do once it’s diagnosed. It can be a scary and difficult task. Having depression is not a sign that you lack faith in God. It is a result of a combination of factors in a person’s physiology and environment. Treatment may involve talk therapy, medication, changing relationship patterns with friends and family or addressing other issues in a person’s life.

Depression in teens is as real as them having the flu. Depression, like the flu, has many symptoms. These symptoms can no more be willed away than the muscle aches or fever that come with the flu. Some people wonder if depression in teens is the same as in adults and for the most part it is with some minor differences; teens often show irritability rather than sadness. Before you diagnose your child with depression, there are specific criteria that need to be met. Here are the warning signs:

- Sadness or irritability
- Change in weight
- Difficulty sleeping or oversleeping
- Energy loss
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Loss of interest or pleasure in things
- Isolating themselves

Additionally, research has

shown that young teens and young adults suffer from depression more than older adults, because of factors including:

- Normal development and the associated stress
- Fighting for independence from parents
- Sex hormones/puberty
- Problems and/or failing in school
- Breaking up with boyfriend or girlfriend
- Death of a family member or friend

Moreover, teens with low self-esteem, who are highly critical of themselves, or have a family history of depression are at a greater risk for depression. Additionally, while family history plays a role in developing depression, situations and stress can bring on depression as well. There are many things that contribute to being depressed and while for some it is a lifelong struggle, for others it may be seasonal or situational. Learning to manage it effectively is key no matter how long the duration or the cause that brought it about.

If you are concerned that your teen may be showing signs of depression, breathe, and then have a talk with them. Identify any changes in their environment that may have contributed to their change in mood. Let them know that you love and support them and that they can talk with you at any time about anything.

Finally, do NOT diagnose your teen; schedule an evaluation

and assessment with a qualified therapist in your area. The 16-year-old in the example above was suffering from depression. In talking with his therapist, he learned healthy ways of coping with and managing his depressive symptoms. Those suffering from depression, and their family members often have to make changes in their environment and ways of relating. However, it is well worth it to have a healthy child and family who have learned the lifelong skills of managing their emotions.

Warning Signs for Teen Depression

- Sadness or Irritability
- Change in weight
- Difficulty sleeping or oversleeping
- Energy loss
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Loss of interest or pleasure in things
- Isolating themselves
- Low self-esteem
- Family history of depression

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Our Mission
New Leaf Resources promotes healthy relationships and personal growth through counseling, education, and consultation from a Christian perspective.

Counselors Speak at GEMS Leaders Conference

Three New Leaf counselors were invited to speak at this year's GEMS Leadership Conference. GEMS is a girls club in churches and Christian organizations that seeks to bring girls into a living, dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ. The annual conference welcomed more than 600 leaders to the campus of Wheaton College.

Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor **LaSaundra Gordon** spoke on the timely topic of bullying. "The ladies I had the pleasure of talking with in my session were engaged, excited and open to learning how to help girls deal with the epidemic of bullying." Gordon said. "They shared personal experiences along with what's been helpful for them. I gave them alternative ways to cope with bullying incidents such as creating a safe



LaSaundra Gordon, a counselor at New Leaf led a workshop on bullying.



Therapists Leah Travis (left) and Anece Alicea led breakout workshops at the recent GEMS Leadership Conference.

space for the girls, building assertiveness skills, teaching relaxation and being a good listener."

Associate Marriage & Family Therapist **Leah Travis** gave an enlightening talk on

"Rediscovering the Family" and Licensed Mental Health Counselor **Anece Alicea** addressed the women on juggling it all as they tackle "Motherhood in the 21st Century."

Speakers Available

Need a speaker for your next group or church function? New Leaf Resources' therapists are available to address groups of any size and age from youth to senior citizens. Whether its for a MOPS group, business organization or youth gathering, New Leaf can address a variety of topics including:

- Addictions/Substance Abuse
- Blended families
- Bullying
- Caregiver Stress

- Cutting and Self-injury
- Depression and Anxiety
- Disaster & Mental Health
- Divorce Recovery
- Forgiveness
- Geriatric Depression
- Grieving During Holidays
- Marital issues
- Managing Stress
- Parenting
- Time Management

For more information or to schedule a speaker for your next event, call the office at (708) 895-7310.

Overcoming depression, grief gives teen life back

A client recently shared how her experience at New Leaf Resources has given her hope, help and healing. After dealing with an unthinkable loss, this teen sought counseling for depression and grief.

"My father committed suicide at the beginning of my freshman year of high school. New Leaf Resources gave me the support I needed to make

it through the day. My therapist also helped me communicate certain things to my mother, in a calm, safe, supportive environment.

Now I look forward to coming home from school and spending time with my family. I can make plans for the nearer future and know that my depression isn't going to affect them. I've gained the

skill and confidence to ask for help when I need it.

I know that I can help others with what I've learned by sharing my experience with others, and being another support for them. New Leaf Resources gave me my life back! I am me again and I love it!"

**- Sandra, 17,
in therapy for depression
and grief counseling**



"New Leaf Resources gave me my life back! I am me again and I love it!"
**Sandra,
a client**

What's "New" at New Leaf Resources



Employees of Dutch Movers carry shelving into the New Leaf Resources' office in Crown Point last May.

The boxes are unpacked, the pictures are hung on the walls and the therapists are settled into their much larger space in the new office located in the On Broadway Complex in Crown Point.

"We were quickly outgrowing our old office, so this new space gives us a com-

fortable setting for our clients and their families, plus room to grow," said Executive Director **Terry Top**. "We are truly grateful for the generous supporters who made this move possible."

The new space boasts a larger waiting area and play therapy room to accommodate younger clients.

We are excited to welcome **Kaitlyn Dykstra** who has joined the Lansing office as an administrative support staff member.

Kaitlyn grew up in the area and attended Lansing Christian School, Illiana Christian High School and Fox College. She is a member of Orland Park Christian Reformed Church, where she and her husband, Steve are youth group leaders.

Also, with her husband, Kaitlyn helps run a mobile DJ service and event lighting business. They specialize in weddings and other special events.

Now a resident of Schererville, Indiana, Kaitlyn enjoys spending time with the "joy of her life," six-month-old daughter Mikayla, her family and friends.

Special thanks to...

- Attorney **Tim Kuiper** for donating his legal services during the purchase of the new Crown Point office.
- The staff at Great **Lakes Bank in Lansing** for volunteering to label and seal our quarterly newsletter.
- **John Stob** for giving his time to prune our landscaping at our Lansing office.
- Our **referral partners** for having confidence in our professional staff and recommending our services.

Save a tree

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Save the Date

Thursday, April 18, 2013
Annual Appreciation Dinner

*The Center for Visual & Performing Arts
in Munster, Indiana*

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Enjoy delicious food, fellowship with friends and celebrate the many success stories at New Leaf!

New Leaf Resources is...

A **professional mental health agency** which provides counseling services to individuals, families, couples, children, churches, schools and businesses.

A **ministry** which brings the best possible care to those we serve, striving to reflect God's grace and love to all who seek help.

A **community resource** offering educational services, prevention programs, training, support and coaching.