

Could My Teen Be Depressed?

by LaSaundra Gordon, M.A., L.C.P.C. , 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 He is unmotivated, withdrawn and very irritable.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 He has completely withdrawn from all his friends.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.



If you have 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 People who are depressed are often perceived as lazy and withdrawn in part due to the lack of drive, motivation and the desire to be alone.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, specific criteria need to be met:**

- 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

If you are concerned that your teen may be showing signs of depression, 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 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.



For more information, call
708-895-7310 or
219-226-1810

