

Depression

What is depression?

Depression is a common mental disorder that presents with depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, low energy, and poor concentration. These problems can be chronic or recurrent and lead to substantial impairments in an individual's ability to take care of his or her everyday responsibilities.

Depression carries a high risk of suicide. Warning signs of suicide include:

- Thoughts or talk of death or suicide
- Thoughts or talk of self-harm or harm to others
- Aggressive behavior or impulsiveness

How common is depression?

One in 33 children and one in 8 adolescents have depression. 51 PYD mentees are diagnosed with it.

Characteristics of depression include:

- A depressed mood during most of the day, particularly in the morning
- Fatigue or loss of energy almost every day
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt almost everyday
- Impaired concentration, indecisiveness
- Insomnia or hypersomnia (excessive sleeping) almost every day
- Markedly diminished interest or pleasure in almost all activities nearly every day
- Recurring thoughts of death or suicide (not just fearing death)
- A sense of restlessness- known as psychomotor agitation- or being slowed down- retardation
- Significant weight loss or gain (a change of more than 5% of body weight in a month)
- Withdrawal or isolating self
- Statements of low self worth

Tips for Mentors:

- Listen when your mentee wants to talk- don't try to force information out of them.
- Avoid giving advice- gently point out that not everything is bad, and offer hope.
- Be proactive about asking your mentee to do things with you and encourage your mentee to continue with favorite activities. If your mentee says no, that's ok- don't push too much.
- Don't be offended- you may feel hurt because your mentee seems to not pay attention to you or may seem angry or uncaring.
- Help your mentee identify life goals and understand their choices for achieving these goals.

- Identify your mentee’s individual strengths, talents, and skills.
- Reinforce social engagement in daily activities.
- Reschedule activities for another day when mentee is feeling better mentally.
- Some youth with depression may take medication. It is important to know that how a youth acts while taking medication can differ from day to day or hour to hour.
- Anticipate the youth may have mood fluctuations. Your mentee may appear to be a “different person” over the course of several meetings.

Resources:

1. National Institute of Mental Health www.nimh.nih.gov/health/.../depression/complete-index.shtml/
2. Depression Center www.webmd.com/depression/default.htm
3. Understanding Depression http://www.helpguide.org/mental/depression_signs_types_diagnosis_treatment.htm