



The Clay Center for Young Healthy Minds

Shining light on mental health through education.

What If My Child Has Depression?

When it comes to depression in a child or teen, it is important to know what signs to look for, when to worry, and what to do. This handout shares information to support you in this process.

Most kids have days when they feel sad or down. But if your child or teen is sad, irritable, or no longer enjoys things, and this occurs day after day over a period of time, they may have **clinical depression**.

What to Look For

Common signs of depression in kids and teens:

- Feeling or appearing sad, tearful, or irritable
- Sleeping more or less than usual
- Low energy levels
- Less interest in things they used to enjoy
- Guilty feelings
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Thoughts of suicide or wanting to die

If you're worried about suicide in your child, take them seriously, stay with them, and call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or text "HOME" to 741741.

When to Worry

You know your child best. So, if you notice there has been a major change in your child's behavior from what it was before, this could be cause for concern. If you notice them struggling with any of the behaviors above, ask them about it. You could say, "You seem more down lately. Is everything OK?" Asking these questions – even about suicide – *does not* cause harmful behavior. It *does* let your child know that you care about them.

What to Do

It is important to know that depression in children and teens is very treatable. If you're concerned about depression, call their pediatrician or a family physician. You can start by saying, "I've noticed changes in my child's behavior that are not typical for him/her." Your doctor can help you to figure out if there is cause for concern. If there is, there are many treatment options for depression, including talk therapy, medications, and school counseling.

**Thank you for all you do to support a young person in your life.
It really makes a difference.**

To learn more about depression in kids and teens, visit us online:
mg claycenter.org/topic/depression

