



New Trends
in Psychology

Depression in Children and Adolescents

Alina Florina Stoica¹

Abstract: Depression in children is not a new phenomenon as we might tend to believe, but rather it was underdiagnosed and underestimated in the past. It is an increasingly common phenomenon in recent decades, but this does not mean that it did not exist before. The idea that before children did not suffer from depression could be supported by arguments like that people were not sufficiently informed about this disorder, and the methods of information were not as many as they are nowadays. Very often this disorder was overlooked in children and attributed to other gender problems: disobedient behavior, school problems, and others.

Keywords: depression; child; adolescent; mental health; effects; school; parents

1. What is Depression?

Depression is a persistent, real and serious mental health disorder that can affect people of all ages, including children and adolescents. Depression affects the way a person feels, thinks and manages his daily activities, is characterized by feelings of sadness and even irritability and can be mild and short-lived or severe and long-lasting.

¹ Student, School of Human Advancement & Life Sciences, Danubius International University of Galati, Romania, Address: 3 Galati Blvd., Galati 800654, Romania, Corresponding author: alinaflorinamarcu@gmail.com.



Copyright: © 2025 by the authors.
Open access publication under the terms and conditions of the
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial (CC BY NC) license
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

2. The Causes That Lead to Depression Among Teenagers

What should parents know? Depression is not a choice, a fad or simply a passing state of sadness, nor is it related to boredom, education or the child's lack of responsibility, therefore it is desirable, as at the first signs of depression in children and adolescents, parents to treat them seriously and to try to help their child because the consequences can be disastrous, reaching in serious cases up to self-mutilation or suicide.

The truth is that adolescence, as a period, is characterized by profound biological and psychological transformations that are not understood or explained, which can easily turn into a "fuel" that will fuel any moment of impasse in the adolescent's life, turning an easy obstacle into a moment of the crisis.

In children and adolescents, depression can manifest as prolonged periods of unhappiness or irritability. It can be triggered by many factors and can have a significant impact on relationships, school performance and self-esteem.

Depression is a complex illness. No one knows exactly what causes it, but it can occur for a variety of reasons.

Causes associated with depression include:

- **Hormonal changes.** Changes in the balance of hormones in the body can be involved in causing or triggering depression.
- **Genetic factors.** Depression that starts between the ages of 15 and 30 can be hereditary. Genetic predisposition can increase the risk of depression. This mental condition is more common in people whose blood relatives, such as a parent or grandparent, also suffer from depression.
- **Early childhood trauma.** Traumatic childhood events, such as physical and/or emotional abuse or the loss of a loved one.

close people, can cause brain changes that increase the risk of depression. Teenagers may suffer from depression after a period of high stress.

There are many reasons why a teenager may become depressed. For example, teenagers may develop feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy if their grades in school are lower than their friends' or the adults in their lives expect. School performance, social status, sexual orientation or family life can each have a major effect on how a teenager feels.

Therefore, among the factors that increase the risk of depression in adolescents, we can list:

- Other mental conditions, such as bipolar disorder, an anxiety disorder, a personality disorder, anorexia and bulimia;
- Learning disorders or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD);
- Permanent pain or chronic diseases, such as cancer, diabetes and asthma;
- Personality – teenagers with certain personality traits, such as low self-esteem or excessive self-criticism, are more likely to suffer from depression;
- Bullying - several studies have shown a link between bullying and depression, and not only among the victims, but also among the aggressors;
- Problems that influence self-esteem, such as obesity, physical defects.

School and social pressure – school competition and social difficulties can be triggers for depression.

- Age-specific physical and emotional changes;
- Conflicts within the family and difficulties in the relationship with the parents;
- Major changes taking place within the family;
- Adaptation problems;
- Abuse of alcohol, nicotine or other drugs.

3. How Do We Recognize Depression in Teenagers?

The symptoms of depression appear together with the change in behavior in adolescents, namely a prolonged state of sadness, sometimes even irritability, loneliness, symptoms that lead to major changes in the relationship with the family, and the results at school.

Depression manifests differently from teenager to teenager, but there are certain signs that appear in all depressed teenagers:

- thoughts about death and/or suicide;
- extreme sensitivity;
- feelings of sadness, which may include bouts of crying for no apparent reason;

- irritability and nervousness;
 - low self-esteem;
 - difficulties in thinking, concentrating, memorizing and making decisions;
 - exaggerated self-blame or self-criticism;
 - loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities;
- loss of interest in spending time with family and friends;
- frustration or feelings of anger, even about small things.

This disorder is often accompanied by a change in behavior, among which can be listed:

- fatigue and lack of energy, even when rested;
- insomnia or hypersomnia (permanent states of excessive sleepiness);
- changes in appetite – decreased appetite and weight loss or increased appetite and weight gain;
- social isolation;
- low care and attention to personal hygiene and/or physical appearance;
- alcohol and/or drug consumption;
- disruptive or risky behavior;
- runs away from home;
- aggression and violence;
- addiction to smartphones, gadgets or other devices that can distract them;
- self-harm.

Many changes in the adolescent's behavior or rebellion can indicate the existence of depression, and that is precisely why parents must approach an open communication with the child to identify his real problems.

Adolescent depression is not a change or something that can be removed by will, but it is a mental condition that can have serious consequences and sometimes require long-term treatment. That is why it must be treated with seriousness and responsibility by its parents, being the main factor on which recovery depends. If the

parents identify the symptoms of depression in time, and take the child to a specialist, the healing process has more chances of success and the “damage” can be minor.

4. What Are the Complications of Depression?

Mental depression can lead to behavioral, physical and emotional problems that can affect the adolescent’s well-being, preventing him from carrying out his daily activities in a normal and productive way.

According to studies, complications related to depression in adolescence can generate:

- school problems;
- family conflicts and difficulties in relationships;
- drug and alcohol abuse;
- wounds as a result of violent behavior;
- suicide attempts or even death.

How long does depression last? There is no clear period of manifestation of depression, this in teenagers, tends to appear and disappear in episodes. But once a teenager has had an episode of depression, they are likely to be depressed again at some point. Untreated, depression can be extremely serious, and even fatal.

5. What Can Parents Do to Help Depressed Teens?

It is not easy to be a parent, nowadays, it is a real test to be a parent and especially a parent of a teenager, the period when things escalate to the maximum.

Adolescence is anyway a period of major changes, marked by many challenges, physical, emotional, biological changes and the adolescent’s personality reaches the peak of all childhood periods up to this point. Therefore, what should parents do to deal with the problems of their teenage children, especially if they also show symptoms of depression? The main factor that would help to identify the problem and solve it would be the communication, help and understanding of the adolescent, but also the safety of the support and parental love that he must be aware of in order to move on and overcome the moments of crisis.

Here are some things parents of depressed teens can do to help:

- Encourage open discussions about your child's well-being. Constantly ask him how he is feeling and listen to him without judging him. Let him express himself and listen carefully to what he says about how he feels.
- Keep the line of communication open, even if the teen seems to want to withdraw.
- Be empathetic, show your support and understanding, without minimizing the importance of his feelings.
- Promotes positive habits. Encourage your child to do the things he usually likes.
- Protect it from stressful environments. Try to keep him away from situations where he might experience excessive stress, mistreatment or violence. And don't forget that parents are role models in children's lives, so reactions and behaviors at home must be balanced and healthy.
- Allow him to make mistakes and help him learn important lessons from the uninspired decisions he makes. Overprotecting or making decisions for him can be perceived as a lack of confidence in his abilities. This can affect his self-esteem and make him feel less confident in his own abilities.
- Creates a positive environment. Family support and stability can have a positive impact on the adolescent suffering from depression.
- If there is a friend or family member with whom the teenager is closer and in whose presence he feels comfortable and can talk openly, encourage him to talk to this person about his concerns.

6. When Should a Teenager See a Specialist?

Globally, it is estimated that 1 in 7 people between the ages of 10 and 19 experience mental health conditions, but these remain largely unrecognized and untreated. Depression, anxiety and conduct disorders are among the main afflictions among teenagers.

Because depression can only be diagnosed by a mental health professional, it is important that the diagnosis is made as early as possible. A teenager who is sad for a long time, behaves differently from his usual way of being and shows states of

irritability and anger may be a depressed teenager, and a medical consultation is necessary.

In most cases, the symptoms of depression do not get better on their own, but can get worse or cause other problems if left untreated. Depressed teenagers may be at risk of suicide, even if the symptoms don't seem serious at first.

Adolescence is a formative period. Physical, emotional and social changes can make teenagers vulnerable to mental health problems.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, depression among teenagers is not a fad and does not depend on willpower. It is a complex problem that, if left untreated, can have serious consequences. But with the right support, treatment and understanding, many teenagers manage to overcome this difficult period, and parents play a key role in this whole process.

References

- Mayo Clinic. (n.d.). *Teen depression: Diagnosis & treatment*. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/teen-depression/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20350991>.
- NHS. (n.d.). *Children depressed: Signs & advice for parents*. <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/children-depressed-signs/>.
- UNICEF. (n.d.). *What is depression?* https://www.unicef.org/parenting/mental-health/what-is-depression?gclid=Cj0KCQiAsburBhCIARIsAExmsu5BkMNkHBfTRsgWOFRFcqubwjGuo2WAZEen71zkG2yU6chffzNyQA4aAu95EALw_wcB.
- WebMD. (n.d.). *Causes of depression*. <https://www.webmd.com/depression/causes-depression>.
- WebMD. (n.d.). *Teen depression*. <https://www.webmd.com/depression/teen-depression>.
- World Health Organization. (n.d.). *Adolescent mental health*. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health/?gclid=Cj0KCQiAsburBhCIARIsAExmsu4Vem9WEV0kMX_m4tZvnE9j5IbrhYQpcodD4__NnoZ2JZJhQMIOJmYaAukzEALw_wcB.