



Tips and Tools for Helping Yourself or a Friend

From *Teenager's Guide to Depression* at HelpGuide.org

The teenage years can be tough, and it's perfectly normal to feel sad or irritable every now and then. But if these feelings don't go away or become so intense that you can't handle them, you may be suffering from depression or anxiety. The good news is that you don't have to feel this way. Help is available.

How to Talk about depression and anxiety with an adult you trust

If you are feeling depression or anxiety it is not your fault, and you didn't do anything to cause it. However, you do have some control over feeling better. The first step is asking for help.

Talking to your parents about depression. It may seem like there's no way your parents will be able to help, especially if they are always nagging you or getting angry about your behavior. The truth is, most parents hate to see their kids hurting. They may feel frustrated because they don't understand what is going on with you or know how to help.

If your parents are abusive in any way, or if they have problems of their own that makes it difficult for them to take care of you, find another adult you trust (such as a relative, teacher, counselor, or coach). This person can either help you approach your parents, or direct you toward the support you need. If you truly don't have anyone you can talk to, refer to the resources below and at the end of this article. There are many hotlines, services, and support groups that can help.

No matter what, talk to someone, especially if you are having any thoughts of harming yourself or others. Asking for help is the bravest thing you can do, and the first step on your way to feeling better.

The importance of accepting and sharing your feelings

It can be hard to open up about how you're feeling—especially when you're feeling depressed, hopeless, ashamed, or worthless. It's important to remember that many people struggle with feelings like these at one time or another. They don't mean you're weak, fundamentally flawed, or no good. Accepting your feelings and opening up about them with someone you trust will help you feel less alone.

No matter what it feels like, people love and care about you, and if you can muster the courage to talk about your depression, it can—and will—be resolved. Some people think that talking about sad feelings will make them worse, but the opposite is almost always true. It is very helpful to share your worries with someone who will listen and care. They don't need to be able to "fix" you; they just need to be good listeners.

Ask for help if you're **Stressed** or having **Thoughts of Harming Yourself**.

Stress and worry can take a big toll, even leading to depression. Talk to a teacher or school counselor if exams or classes seem overwhelming or if you are being bullied. Likewise, if you have a health concern you feel you can't talk to your parents about—such as a pregnancy scare or drug problem—seek medical attention at a clinic or see a doctor. A health professional can help you approach your parents (if that is required) and guide you toward appropriate treatment. If you're dealing with relationship, friendship, or family problems, talk to an adult you trust. Your school may have a counselor you can go to for help, or you may want to ask your parents to make an appointment for you to see a therapist.

Coping with suicidal thoughts. If your feelings become so overwhelming that you can't see any solution besides harming yourself or others, you need to get help *right away*. And yet, asking for help when you're in the midst of such strong emotions can be really tough. If talking to a stranger might be easier for you, call **1-800-273-TALK** to speak in confidence to someone who can understand and help you deal with your feelings.

Places to call to arrange an appointment with a professional counselor:

- Samaritan Counseling Center (717) 560-9969
- TeamCare Behavioral Health (717) 391-0172
- Philhaven 717-273-8871, ask for Scheduling