

What Is Depression?

A Guide for Young People

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF DEPRESSION?

WHEN MIGHT LOW MOOD BE A PROBLEM?

HOW CAN I MANAGE DEPRESSION?



Sadness, low mood and irritability are something we all experience. We might have heard about the 'typical teenage behaviours' like having mood swings, wanting to stay in bed all day and not always doing what we're asked or not getting along with others.

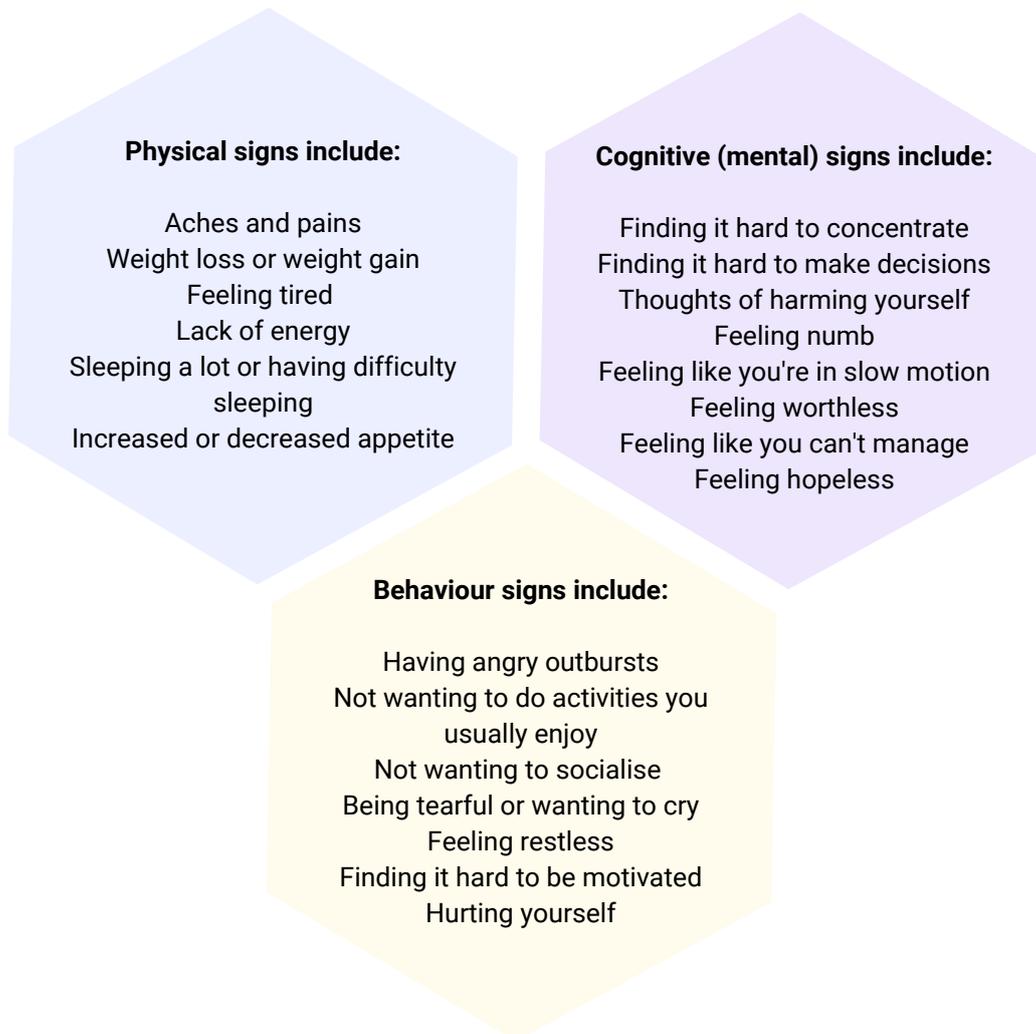
These behaviours aren't unusual. There are a lot of changes going on within the brain during your teenage years. The areas of the brain involved in decision making, planning, impulse control, recognising how other people feel and understanding your own feelings are still developing.

For some people, the ups and downs we all feel can be something more serious. It may be that you notice that feeling low doesn't go away, that you're no longer interested in things you used to be or you no longer get any enjoyment out of them. You might find yourself feeling irritable and easily annoyed a lot of the time.

It's important to remember that we aren't choosing to feel or behave this way. Sometimes our brain may need some help in making these feelings and reactions more manageable for us.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF DEPRESSION?

Depression can express itself in different ways within the mind, body and behaviour. You may notice that you experience several of these or that you only experience some.



WHEN MIGHT LOW MOOD BE A PROBLEM?

Feeling sad, irritable, tearful or low for a period of time is completely normal. Sometimes people may say someone is depressed when they feel low for a short while or after they've had a stressful or difficult time. Difficult life events can contribute to depression but feeling low after you've been through something challenging doesn't necessarily mean that person has depression.

Help may be needed if these feelings have a significant impact upon daily life. If you've been experiencing low mood along with any of the signs listed above for at least two weeks and these feelings cause you distress or stop you doing your usual activities, it may be that you are experiencing depression.

HOW CAN I MANAGE DEPRESSION?

Working with a trained, qualified counsellor or therapist can help you manage depression. Talking through your feelings can help you recognise and understand them more, and your counsellor or therapist can help you find ways to make them less overwhelming.

A counsellor or therapist can also suggest creative ways you can use, such as journaling or drawing/painting your feelings.

There are also strategies you can use to help manage depression:

- Physical activity we enjoy can help relieve stress and boost our mood by releasing feel-good chemicals and hormones.
- Set a goal for yourself each day. This can be something small, like tidying your desk or texting someone to see how they are. Make sure you acknowledge each and every effort you make.
- Think about the activities that mean something to you and you enjoy. Schedule in some time each day for one or more of these activities.
- Reach out to someone who makes you feel supported and safe. This could be a friend, family member or someone else you trust. Try to meet up in person where possible as just being around people who makes us feel cared for can help our mood.
- Practice relaxation techniques such as deep breathing or progressive muscle relaxation. These can reduce our stress levels and relax both body and mind.

There are many strategies you can try. You might find that some work better for you than others. It may be discouraging to try something and find it doesn't have the effect you had hoped for but the key is finding what is effective for you.

Working with a counsellor or therapist can also help you identify some of these techniques. Your counsellor or therapist is here to support you and find the most helpful strategies for you, not to try and make you fit the strategies.

If you feel like you might need help with your mood, our team is here for you. You can call us on 0800 634 4395, email admin@ypcs.uk or visit our website at www.ypcs.uk.