

What Is Depression?

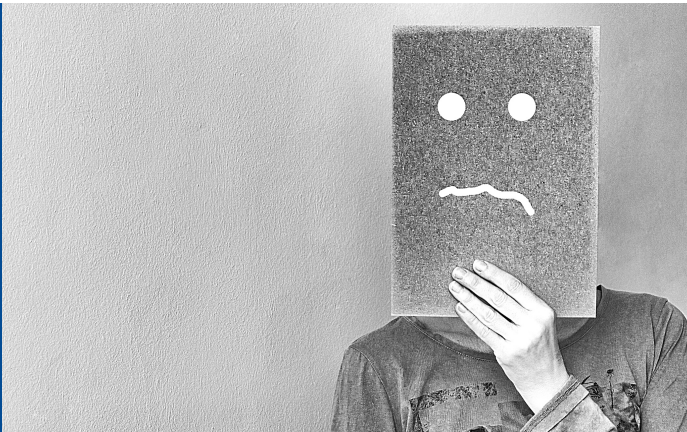
A Guide for Parents

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

**WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF
DEPRESSION?**

**WHEN MIGHT LOW MOOD BE A
PROBLEM?**

**HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD
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 is asked or not getting along with others.

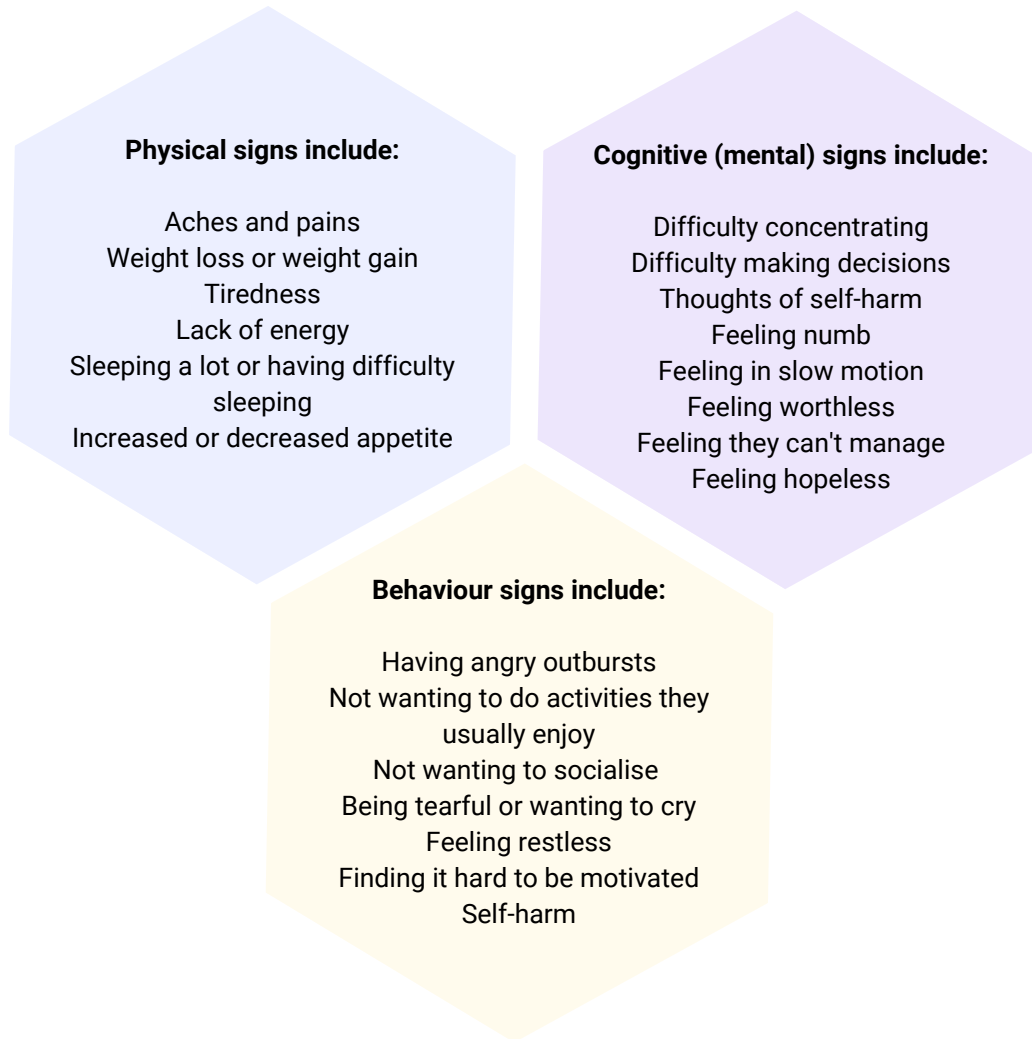
These behaviours aren't unusual. There are a lot of changes going on within the brain during the teenage years. The areas of the brain involved in decision making, planning, impulse control, recognising how other people feel and understanding ones own feelings are still developing.

For some, these ups and downs can be something more serious. It may be that you notice that your child's low mood persists, that they are no longer interested in things they used to be or no longer get any enjoyment out of their activities. They may be irritable and easily annoyed a lot of the time.

It's important to remember that your child isn't choosing to feel or behave this way. Sometimes the brain may need some help in making these feelings and reactions more manageable.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF DEPRESSION?

Depression can express itself in different ways within the mind, body and behaviour. You may notice that your child experiences several of these or that they 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 we'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 your child has been experiencing low mood along with any of the signs listed above for at least two weeks and these feelings cause them distress or stop them doing their usual activities, it may be that they are experiencing depression.

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD MANAGE DEPRESSION?

Working with a trained, qualified counsellor or therapist can help your child manage depression. Having the opportunity to talk through their feelings can help them recognise and understand these feelings more. Their counsellor or therapist can help find ways to make those feelings less overwhelming.

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

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

- Let your child know that you are available for them should they wish to talk. Just listening and being there for them is very powerful.
- Use open-ended questions that encourage discussion. You could try noticing and wondering such as 'I've noticed you've seemed down lately. I'm wondering if there's something bothering you?' or 'I've noticed you've been spending a lot of time by yourself. I'm wondering how you're feeling?'
- Acknowledge and validate your child's feelings. We may feel like we are encouraging the feelings but by saying we understand and accept that our child is feeling this way, we are not saying we think their feelings are 'right' or 'correct'. We are allowing our child to feel heard and understood. Telling our child to not worry or that there's no reason for their feelings can be confusing or make our child reluctant to share.
- Remember to care for yourself. It is not 'your fault' your child is experiencing depression. Many parents can feel guilty, frustrated or as though they have failed. However it may feel at times, you play an important role in supporting your child.

There are many strategies you can try together. It may be discouraging to try something and find it doesn't have the effect you and your child had hoped for but the key is finding what is effective for them.

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

If you feel like your child might need help with their anxiety, 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.