

## FOR PARENTS:

### **Signs of Depression in Teens:**

Can be feelings of sadness & worthlessness, frequent thoughts of death, dying, and suicide; and withdrawing from family and friends. Other signs are not as noticeable such as irritability, changes in eating and sleeping habits; fatigue or lethargy; inability to focus or concentrate; stomach problems or headaches; poor hygiene; and acting out behaviors.

The relationship between depression and mental illness and substance abuse is bi-directional; people who are depressed or suffering from mental illness are more likely to abuse substances and substance abusers are more likely to suffer from depression and other mental illnesses.

As a parent your role is challenging. The most important thing a parent can do is listen to understand (not respond) and then validate your child's feelings and try to work on understanding. Some wording examples for parents "Tell me more about that and help me understand what you are thinking and feeling". Your child needs you, even if they push back, just respond with kindness, love, and patience.

<https://www.safeandsober.org/resources/parents-guide-depression-teenagers/>

Talking to children about mental illness can be an opportunity for parents and caregivers to provide their children with information and also an opportunity to connect more in depth with your child.

[ParentCaregiverTraining@samhsa.hhs.gov](mailto:ParentCaregiverTraining@samhsa.hhs.gov) email for questions or comments

### **Need help?**

- For mental or substance use disorders, call SAMHSA's National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357) or TTY: 1-800-487-4889, or text your zip code to 435748 (HELP4U).
- For help searching for substance use and mental health facilities, health care centers, buprenorphine practitioners, and opioid treatment providers with FindTreatment.gov.
- For help with suicidal thoughts or behaviors, talk to someone you can trust through the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Call or text 988 or chat the Lifeline.

<https://www.samhsa.gov/families/parent-caregiver-resources>

Parents can open conversation with kids on topics of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco early on. Take advantage of teachable moments through TV, Movies, Internet, or examples of life situations. Keep your tone calm and non-judgmental. You would be surprised on how open your child may be on these topics.

Encourage your child to be involved in clubs, sports, hobbies, or interests. Pay attention as there are signs you may easily overlook. Check in frequently with your child, know who they are hanging with, know their parents, don't be afraid to ask questions, and don't be afraid to have eyes on cell phones, emails, websites, texts, and encourage in person fun friend and family time with your kids!