



DEPRESSION FACT SHEET

DEPRESSION is an illness that affects the whole body – thoughts, feelings, behavior and physical health.

DEPRESSION affects 2% of children and 4% of youth.

DEPRESSION affects all areas of a child's or youth's life – home, work, school, and social life.

CLINICAL SYMPTOMS

WHAT DOES A PARENT/CAREGIVER SEE?

Persistent Sad or Irritable Mood	→	Sadness; hopelessness or irritable: angry and aggressive
Loss of Interest in Everyday Activities	→	Boredom; dropping activities; loss of interest in fun activities
Significant Change in Appetite or Weight	→	Frequent unexplained physical complaints such as headaches, muscle aches and pains; stomach aches; change in weight; worries a lot
Difficulty Sleeping or Oversleeping Loss of Energy Difficulty Concentrating	→	Frequent absences from school; poor performance in school; unable to concentrate or stay focused; unfinished tests; consistently forgets homework; sleepy
Agitation or Slowing of Behavior	→	Restless; can't sit still or speech and behavior slowed; sluggish; feeling edgy
Feeling Worthless or Guilty	→	Talks of running away from home; overreacts to disappointment or failure; low self-esteem
Ongoing Thoughts of Death or Suicide	→	Fear or preoccupation with dying; talking about people who have died

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES are treatments that have shown through clinical research to produce positive outcomes for children and their families.

The most common effective treatments for Depression are:

- **Psychoeducation**
- **Problem-Solving**
- **Activity Scheduling**
- **Relaxation**
- **Skill-building**
- **Social Skills**
- **Cognitive Therapy**



The most common effective treatments for Depression are:

Psychoeducation

Psychoeducation is teaching children/adolescents and their caretakers about their mental illness. The purpose is to help children/youth and their families understand how the illness affects them and what kind of activities or treatment might help. Psychoeducation helps children/youth and their families understand that there are others who have similar problems and that there are treatments that work. This type of education helps them understand what will happen in the treatment sessions and how long the treatment might take. They will also learn what role the parent, the therapist, and the child/youth will play in the treatment, and that they will be a team that will work on problems together.

Problem-solving

Children and youth with mental illnesses often think their problems are too big to handle. Problem-solving is a strategy that teaches a child how to clearly identify a problem, look at all possible solutions, and choose a solution. They also learn to evaluate their choices, and, if necessary, come up with different solutions. This strategy teaches children and youth how to use problem-solving in their day-to-day activities.

Activity Scheduling (for Activity Selection)

This is a way to help children and youth understand the link between positive activities and feeling good. The child/youth and parents work together outside of therapy. They plan fun activities that the child/youth can do with people he/she likes. This reinforces for the child/youth that doing activities we enjoy can make us feel good. It may include regular time together with a parent or friends, or time helping others. Creating a schedule for those activities makes it more likely that they will actually do them. The children and youth learn that when they keep busy they don't have as much time to worry or feel bad.

Relaxation

Ongoing anxiety or stress can make children and youth irritable and can interfere with concentration. Relaxation methods help children/youth reduce stress. These exercises include muscle-relaxation, breathing exercises, imagery, mediation, and similar activities. Some methods are meant to be used away from daily activities. Others are useful in the moment.

Skill-building

Skill-building is a structured and guided approach to helping children and youth learn new skills. They learn that one way we feel better about ourselves is by developing our talents. This strategy helps the child/youth set a goal for learning a certain skill he/she wants to develop. The child or youth then works with the parents and therapist to learn the steps leading up to that goal. They keep practicing the small steps until they have mastered their goal.

Social Skills

The onset of mental illness can cause children and youth to struggle in relationships. They may not learn or understand how to engage with others. Social skills training can help the child/youth understand the importance of positive interactions with others. It teaches them how to engage with others in positive ways.

Cognitive Therapy

Cognitive therapy is used to teach children and youth about how the way they think about things can affect how they feel, and how they feel can affect how they act (behave). Cognitive methods might be used to help children/youth understand how their thoughts are related to their moods and behaviors. They are taught strategies to help them check the accuracy of their thoughts and replace negative or unhelpful thoughts with more positive or helpful thoughts.