

Is your child depressed or suicidal? Here are the warning signs

June 25 2019, by Len Canter



Many parents think it couldn't happen to their kids, but the number of

children and teens admitted to children's hospitals for thoughts of self-harm or suicide is alarming.

Each year 4,600 young people between the ages of 10 and 24 take their own lives, and 157,000 are treated in emergency departments for self-inflicted injuries, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A recent survey of high school students revealed that 16% have seriously considered suicide; 13% had developed a plan; and 8% had attempted suicide in the previous year. Childhood depression is real and devastating.

Parents can take steps to try to prevent depression in their children and keep them emotionally healthy as they grow. Help them create a social network early on through new friendships; involvement in sports, afterschool activities or hobbies; and memberships in organizations with programs for [young people](#). And, just as important, parents need to be alert to the early signs of depression. There are many warning signs parents should be aware of, according to the nonprofit Mental Health America, such as excessive fears, anxiety and irritability.

Signs of Childhood Depression

- Doing poorly in school
- Loss of interest in friends and favorite activities
- Not eating or sleeping well
- Feeling sad, hopeless and/or angry
- Lack of self-esteem
- Lack of enthusiasm, energy or motivation
- Overreacting to criticism and having trouble dealing with authority figures
- Being unable to focus, and acting restless and agitated
- Using alcohol and recreational drugs

If your child shows signs of emotional distress, don't assume it will just pass. Young people need guidance from [parents](#) and other adults to understand and work through all the emotions they're experiencing. Encourage them to share their feelings, and get them help from a [mental health](#) professional with experience in child depression, especially if their mood keeps them from functioning normally day-to-day.

Never ignore talk of suicide and remember that it may be in subtle or vague terms. Be especially vigilant if there's a family history of depression as this increases a child's risk.

More information: Mental Health America has more on [teen depression](#) and how to get your child help.

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