

Momentum

Coping with depression; preventing suicide



Employee Assistance Program

1-800-327-1393

For TTY Users: 1-800-456-4006

Responding to depression's challenges

- ☑ Depression usually involves intense feelings of sadness, hopelessness and despair that continue for two weeks or more.
- ☑ Physical symptoms may include dramatic loss of energy; insomnia, early awakening, or oversleeping; appetite and weight changes; and unexplained aches and pains in the body.
- ☑ Behavioral symptoms may include intense sorrow; a loss of interest in one's usual activities; restlessness, irritability or anger; poor concentration and decision making; and low self-esteem or feelings of worthlessness.

What is depression?

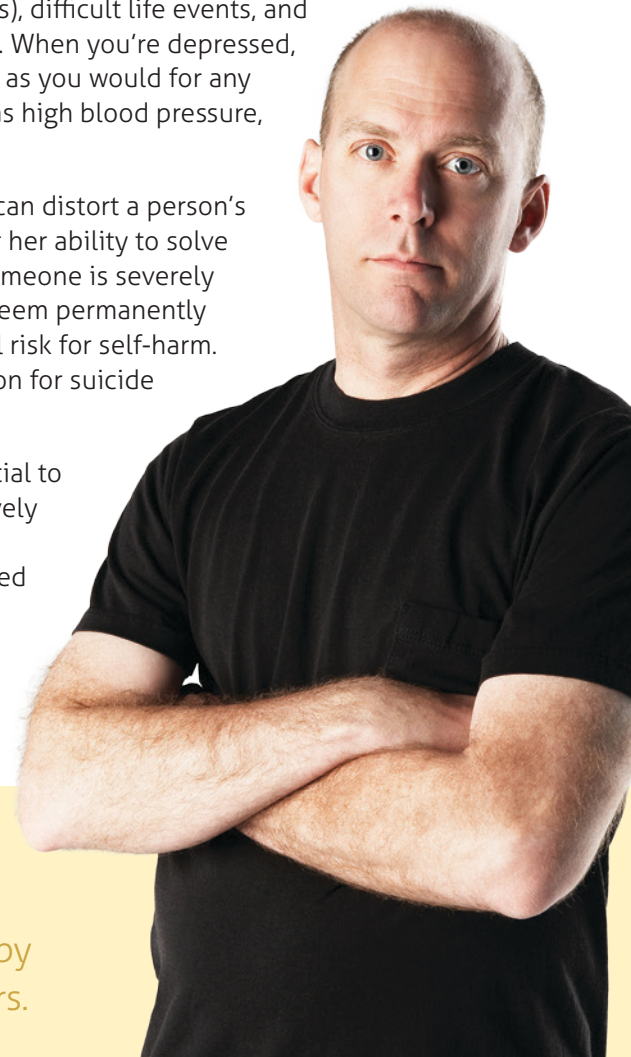
Many external factors can lead a person to consider suicide, from bullying to relationship breakups to financial crises. However, the internal impact on a person's emotions—depression—is the dark cloud that makes self-harm more likely.

Depression is a serious health condition typically caused by some combination of brain chemical imbalances, genetic factors (i.e., family history of the illness), difficult life events, and co-existing medical conditions. When you're depressed, it's essential to seek treatment as you would for any other medical condition such as high blood pressure, diabetes or allergies.

The experience of depression can distort a person's thinking, interfering with his or her ability to solve painful life problems. When someone is severely depressed, the problems can seem permanently inescapable, and there is a real risk for self-harm. In fact, the most common reason for suicide is *untreated depression*.

In cases of depression, it's crucial to get treatment—which is relatively easy to access and often quite effective. If you, a friend or loved one are severely depressed, do everything you can to promptly arrange immediate professional help.

When you recognize depression symptoms, promptly see your physician or a mental health professional for a confidential evaluation. Pediatricians can play a vital role by screening adolescents for suicidal thoughts and risk factors.



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Warning signs of suicide

The impulsive act of suicide can be prevented if you're able to spot the warning signs and help keep the person safe. When someone is at risk for suicide, they may:

- Withdraw and become isolated from family and friends
- Give away prized possessions
- Often talk about death, seem to wish for death or having not being born, or make statements such as, "There's nothing left to live for"
- Engage in daring and risk-taking behavior
- Show stark personality changes (e.g., withdrawal, aggression, moodiness) or large emotional swings
- Be very depressed
- Have attempted suicide in the past
- Exhibit a change in appetite, weight or sleeping patterns
- Obtain items that could be used for self-harm such as a gun or medications
- Lose interest or pleasure in regular activities, or express a lack of interest in the future
- Experience a severe loss of energy.

If you recognize these symptoms, quickly contact a mental health provider, physician, or suicide/crisis hotline for advice and help.

Responding to depression's challenges



Effective depression treatment

Key components of treatment include correctly diagnosing depression and starting an individualized plan of care. The most common treatments are 1) therapeutic counseling with a licensed mental health professional, 2) a course of antidepressant medication, or 3) a combination of both counseling and medication. This combination often proves highly effective.



Living with bipolar depression

Bipolar disorder can involve severe mood swings. If you have bipolar depression, discuss your treatment options and progress with your doctor. Keep to a regular routine and get adequate sleep. Exercise regularly to relieve stress. Recognize warning signs that typically precede your manic or depressive episodes. Take your medication exactly as directed.



Awareness of teen suicide risk

With suicide now the second leading cause of death among U.S. teens, the risk to this population is clear. When a young person expresses feelings of hopelessness and makes references to self-harm or death, parents should take these statements—which are essentially cries for help—very seriously.



Webinar—Join us on September 14, 2016, for a webinar entitled *Substance Use Awareness with Teens and Young Adults*. Register [here](#).