



# TEENAGE DEPRESSION

## SYMPTOMS, THERAPIES, SUPPORT SYSTEMS

*eden harir*

According to The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) it is estimated that depression affects five percent of adolescents.

As awareness for teenage depression grows, more people are recognizing its effect on their lives.

Depression is a general state of sad and hopeless feelings, expressed over along period of time.

"People with depression usually have low energy and low motivation," Dr. Russell Hyken, a notable St. Louis child and adolescent psychologist, said.

Poor appetite, trouble sleeping, change in friends, poor grades and frequent illness are all signs of depression.

Depression is constant sadness. Bad moods and stress are expected from teenagers.

"Depression is not about having a bad day or a bad week. It is about having many bad weeks and months," Hyken said.

Too much stress ties closer to anxiety than depression.

There are different types of depression.

"Dystymic depression (mild) happens all the time; severe depression can affect a person's entire life," Hyken said.

Freshman Yvonne Krumrey has a friend who is currently depressed.

"She spends a lot more time by herself. She gets severely obsessed with whatever the trigger was and she gets sick a lot, too," Krumrey said.

Hyken tells us if a person is depressed, they are more likely to get sick, and if they are sick, they are more likely to get depressed.

Depressed teens may be less inclined to participate in social events, may avoid contact with family or friends and tend to want to physically isolate themselves.

Healthy teens are more active out of school and make an effort to be social.

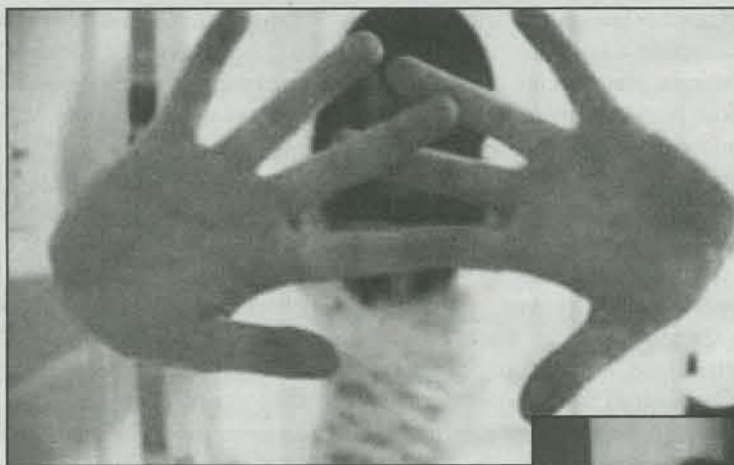
"I hang out with friends and go to the mall or the movies, and I love playing softball," freshman Taylor Seago said.

Most teenagers also have some type of support system.

"Going to church makes me happy since there are so many awesome people there," Taylor said.

Genes can also cause depression. "If a parent suffers from depression, their child is more likely to suffer from depression. Also, people who have bad living situations are more likely to be depressed," Hyken said.

Struggles with relationships or disruptions at home



are common triggers for teen depression. "For teenagers, relationships with peers or parents or items related to schoollike academics and involvement tend to be priorities, so depression is most often triggered by strained relationships or difficulties in school," guidance counselor Chris Lorenz said.

Not only does depression affect its victims, but it affects the people around them too, like their friends.

"If your friend is depressed, you are not going to catch depression, but you might be more likely to engage in risk taking activities," Hyken said.

Krumrey has her own thoughts on her friend's problem.

"It's harder to be her friend because it seems like she's down all the time, and there's nothing I can do to change that for good,

For her, talking to her in person and being with her makes her feel better because it distracts her from the depression. It's really stressful on me because she relies on me more than anyone else," Krumrey said. "I know it's lame, but when people treat each other [more kindly] and civilly, it's not as harsh toward the depressed person, or anyone really, because that's where it all starts."

Research shows that unlike adults, depression in children and teenagers is highly treatable. Certain anti-depression medications, called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) can be beneficial for teens with depression. There are a number of different SSRIs.

Types of different psychological therapies have been shown to be effective, but the first step to overcoming depression is recognizing it and telling a trusted adult.

"If you are a depressed teen, get help so that if you become depressed later in life you have the tools to deal with it," Hyken said.

West High also recognizes students seeking help with depression.

"Between school counselors, social workers, other school staff and outside resources, there are various levels of ways we respond to students experiencing depression," Lorenz said.

The awareness of depression is increasing. More people know about it, so people who



suffer from depression are more likely to seek treatment.

"It's important to understand your own emotions and how they impact your day-to-day life as much as it is important to recognize friends in need who may be experiencing depression too. Just know that if you're struggling with feelings of depression, you're not alone," Lorenz said.

People need to understand it is okay to be depressed; however it is important to seek help and support.

"I tell teens if you think someone is depressed, make sure they tell a trusted adult. Depression shouldn't be a stigma. It is just like wearing glasses or having asthma — people shouldn't be ashamed of it. Hopefully your generation [can learn] to understand that," Hyken said.

Since dealing with depression can be a challenge, you must be aware of how to help yourself and the people close to you.

Dr. Hyken can be reached at [www.ed-psy.com](http://www.ed-psy.com).

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