

Depression in Children

Liya Panayotova, Alexander Draghici10K reads

Depression is a condition that occurs both in adults and children. Some symptoms such as feelings of sadness, apathy and lack of energy are very common in young people.

Although children's symptoms of depression are similar to those of adults, it is easiest to spot childhood depression by looking at your kid's school performance and social interactions. Emotional changes are also an important indicator to consider.



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What Causes Depression in Children?

Depression may be caused by a number of factors, such as a chemical imbalance in the brain, genetic predisposition, physical and psychological trauma, medication, stress, difficulties in the family, etc.

Although the reasons for childhood depression may vary, or could be a combination of several factors, what is important to remember is that this is a very real and serious condition, which can have a significant impact on a child's life.

If not coped with in a healthy way, childhood depression can have detrimental consequences later in life as well, so it is crucial for parents to be watchful and aware of the condition.

How to Recognize Depression?

Knowing how to spot childhood depression makes the difference between early intervention and prolonged suffering. When it comes to physical or mental problems, children are not always able to describe their struggle. That's why parents should always be on the lookout for any signs that may point towards a disorder.

Changes in Sleep

Changes in your child's sleep pattern may often indicate a problem. It may be that your child can't get enough sleep at night, or the lack of energy, associated with depression, may cause excessive sleep.

Changes in Appetite

This is a common symptoms of depression for both children and adults. Although it is normal for children to need more nutrition at certain periods of growth, if you notice a significant change in your child's appetite, this may be a symptoms of depression.

Irritability

Children are rarely able to verbalize what is happening in their inner world. This frustration may lead to angry outbursts or crying.

Social Withdrawal

We all need social interaction, to develop various skills, as well as to feel loved and included. If your child has started to avoid others, or group events, this may be a sign that he/she is struggling with a mood disorder.

Poor Academic Performance

Doing poorly at school can be a front for many underlying issues, including depression. Before considering the possibility of a mood disorder, make sure the learning environment is stimulating enough and meets your child's needs.

Self-Doubt

If your child becomes extremely frustrated in the face of failure, or if they are unwilling and afraid to participate in new activities, this may be a sign of unhealthy self-doubt. This symptom may resemble feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness as well.

Unexplained Physical Pain

Depression may be accompanied by an array of physical symptoms, such as headaches, stomach pains, vertigo, nausea, etc. In this case, the best course of action is to rule out any medical causes first, by consulting a physician.

What to Do?

The most important point to remember is that depression is not something that will disappear on its own or which your child can outgrow. Unless carefully addressed, depression can lead to crippling lifelong repercussions for your child.

What you can do is look for a licensed and experienced child psychologist in your area. You can ask your physician or school counselor for a recommendation. A psychologist can help your child cope in a healthy way and empower him or her to have a happy life.

A crucial task before parents, is to provide unconditional love, support and motivation for their children, especially when the young ones struggle with a mental health problem.

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