



### Understanding Depression in Teens: Tips for Identification

- ❖ Know the prevalence of Major Depression: Major depression strikes about 1 in 12 adolescents. In any given 6-month period, about 5 percent of 9- to 17-year-olds are estimated to be suffering from Major Depression. There are other forms of Depression as well. Check out the Model Web Resources at Practical Help for Parents website regarding Depression.
- ❖ Know the symptoms of Major Depression. All too often, depression is left untreated because people fail to recognize the symptoms and believe that it is just normal sadness, a phase that a teen is going through, or a sign of weakness. This can be a terrible mistake. It is important to know the symptoms, so that you can distinguish depression from occasional normal sadness or moodiness.
- ❖ Common symptoms of depression include:
  - Sad or irritable mood
  - Loss of interest in activities that were once enjoyable
  - Large changes in appetite or weight (eating too much or too little)
  - Difficulty sleeping or oversleeping
  - Slow or agitated movement; Loss of energy
  - Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
  - Difficulty concentrating
  - Frequent, intrusive or ongoing thoughts of death or suicide
- ❖ Most teens experience some of these symptoms occasionally. But if a teen has a number of these symptoms for more than a few weeks, he or she is likely to have major depression, and may need professional help.
- ❖ Teenagers often show depression in other ways as well. Some other signs to watch for in teens include:
  - Frequent headaches, muscle aches, stomach aches or tiredness, without a medical cause
  - Frequent absences from school or poor performance in school
  - Talk of or efforts to run away from home
  - Boredom, sulking; ongoing lack of interest in spending time with friends or family
  - Alcohol or substance abuse
  - Social isolation, poor communication
  - Fear of death
  - Extreme sensitivity to rejection or failure
  - Increased irritability, anger, hostility, or crying
  - Reckless behavior
  - Neglect of clothing and appearance
  - Difficulty with relationships
  - Changes in mood

*If you suspect that your teen may be suffering from depression, talk to a mental health professional and get some help...even if you just "check things out" to make sure everything is okay.*

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