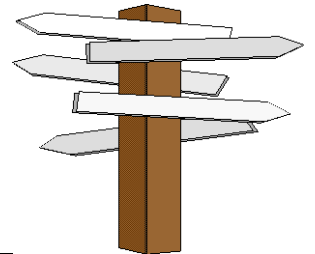


# Understanding Childhood Depression

- 📌 Children get depressed too. While some believe that depressed mood is only experienced in adulthood, this is not correct. Teenagers often develop serious mood disorders.
- 📌 Feeling a little bit sad at times doesn't mean your child is experiencing depression. Depression lasts longer and is a lot more than feeling sad.
- 📌 Depression is sometimes more difficult to identify in children as it is often 'masked'. Some children with depression may appear to others as though they just have behavioural problems.



## ***Signs and Symptoms of Depression in Children***

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Behaviour</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Keeping to themselves</li> <li>✓ Refusal to engage in usual activities (or lack of motivation to engage in activities)</li> <li>✓ Reduced interest in things used to enjoy</li> <li>✓ Crying</li> <li>✓ Behavioural problems: defiant behaviour, aggression, irritability</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Physical</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Sleep problems</li> <li>✓ Lack of energy</li> <li>✓ Changes in appetite</li> <li>✓ Weight loss or gain</li> <li>✓ Aches and pains</li> <li>✓ Headaches</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Thinking</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Thinking negatively about self, life or the future</li> <li>✓ Low self-esteem/confidence</li> <li>✓ Preoccupation with death and dying</li> <li>✓ Concentration problems</li> <li>✓ Trouble making mind up</li> <li>✓ Difficulty solving everyday problems</li> <li>✓ Persistent worrying</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Emotions</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Feeling sad, miserable, down</li> <li>✓ Feeling irritable, worse temper</li> <li>✓ Feeling anxious or fearful</li> <li>✓ Feeling hopeless or worthless</li> </ul>

## ***What Can Cause Depression in Children?***

The causes for depression in children are similar to the causes for adults. Depression is often caused by multiple factors. These may include:

**Environment:** Stress at home, academic difficulties, problems with peers and bullying, losing someone close, chronic illness

**Thinking:** When children are depressed, they tend to think negatively of everything. They often don't pay attention to good things and get overly frustrated by the bad.

**Biology:** Some children with depression may have an imbalance of chemicals in the brain.

**Genetics:** Depression can run in families. Children are at greater risk of developing depression if a parent or relative has experienced depression or another psychological disorder.

## ***How is Childhood Depression Treated?***

Psychological treatment is often effective at alleviating depressed mood in children. Medication may be used adjunctively for children presenting with more severe depressed mood.

### Psychological Treatment: CBT

- There are a number of different approaches to psychological therapy for children- the best evidence is for cognitive behaviour therapy or CBT. CBT helps children to get active again and to identify and change their negative thoughts about both themselves and their situation.
- Some family therapy can also be helpful and for many kids, a family approach focusing on attachments and emotional closeness is more important than individual therapies like CBT.

### Medical Treatment: Antidepressants

- Antidepressants are safe and work for most children
- Usually, children take antidepressants when they are depressed and for 6-12 months afterwards
- Antidepressants don't work straight away- it may take 4-8 weeks to get the maximum benefits
- There are a number of different antidepressants. Ask your doctor for more information about these drugs.

If you want to speak with a psychologist about any concerns about your child's mood, you can call a psychologist at PsychStuff4Kids. We specialise in working with children and teens.



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