

# Recognizing Teen Depression!!

Oh, the emotional rollercoaster ride you take with your teen. The anger, the embarrassment, the love, the frustration, the joy, the laughter, the rudeness etc... So how, then, can you recognize normal teenage emotions versus a serious issue, such as: depression? Here is a small list of emotional issues many teens experience:

- Moody- You can ask a simple question like, “how was your day?” and you may get, “WHAT?!, Don’t talk to me”
- Sad/Depressed- One comment from a friend can send them to a whirl of crying in their room all weekend.
- Laziness/No motivation- “Why can’t you be like Kurt? His mom told me he is in 2 sports, 4 clubs and sings in the church choir. What do you do besides video games?!”
- Anger- Telling your child he cannot go pool hopping till 1 am causes him to yell and slam doors. Perhaps calling you names.
- Changes in eating & sleeping- Sometimes they eat for days, sometimes they have a soda and nothing more. Sleep: they can go off of 3 hours because they went with their classmates to watch the sunrise at 3 am and other times they sleep for 14 hours straight!
- Feeling of worthlessness and “BLAH”- It is a time for teens to discover who they are. They are developing an identity and often times they determine how cool or how important they are through comparison with others. At times, they feel as if they don’t cut it and feelings of worthlessness may kick in.

Here is the key to determining normal teen feelings and depression: **length of time** and **severity**. Many teens will have the above episodes, but in due time, friends, family, extracurricular activities will balance out these feelings. If your child does NOT get out of the rut and is week after week after week sad, angry, and sleeping a lot, you may need to have a conversation with him/her or ask a family physician to check it out. Teen depression is real and we want to make sure our children are heard and helped. In conclusion, EXPECT uncomfortable feelings and behaviors—it doesn’t mean they have a problem. BUT, understand normal teen behavior and know the difference between that and depression cues. As always, keep the relationship between you and your teen strong. ~Ms. Chong