

Recognizing teen depression

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Special to The IFP

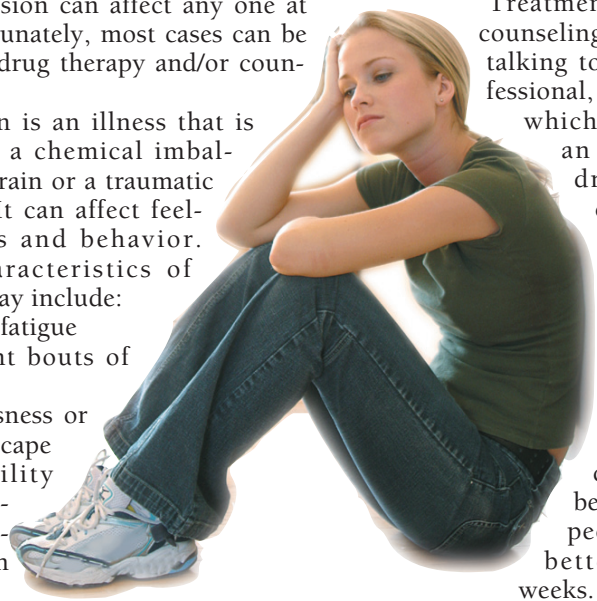
Everyone gets depressed occasionally and that's perfectly normal. But when those feelings of hopelessness, sadness and inadequacy continue for a long period of time, it is time to get help. Major depression can affect any one at any age. Fortunately, most cases can be treated with drug therapy and/or counseling.

- Depression is an illness that is triggered by a chemical imbalance in the brain or a traumatic experience. It can affect feelings, moods and behavior. Typical characteristics of depression may include:
- Chronic fatigue
 - Frequent bouts of crying
 - Sleeplessness or sleeping to escape
 - Irritability and short-temperedness, even with friends
 - Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
 - Feelings of inadequacy, sadness, helplessness or guilt
 - Loss of appetite or change in eating habits
 - Lack of enjoyment for things once enjoyed
 - Thoughts of death, dying or suicide
 - Drop in grades
 - Faltering relationships
- There are several types of depression

and only a doctor can diagnose and prescribe the proper treatment. Having a depressive disorder is not a sign of weakness. It is an illness just like the flu or mumps and therefore should be treated. Like most illnesses, it will not get better on its own. Without the proper treatment, depression will get worse.

Treatment can consist of counseling, which involves talking to a qualified professional, or drug therapy, which involves taking an anti-depressant drug to correct a chemical imbalance. In many cases, participating in both types of therapy may have the longest lasting effects. Whether drug therapy or counseling works best for them, most people start to feel better within a few weeks.

Teens are often moody because of their raging hormones, but if symptoms become severe, don't try to handle the situation on your own. Life is too short for that. You are only going to be a teenager once and you should enjoy those years to the fullest. If you experience the symptoms of depression, talk to your parents, school counselor, teacher, family doctor or clergy. They can help you get the treatment you need.



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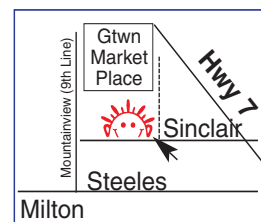
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