

Workshop for Parents/Caregivers of Middle and High School Level Students

Topic: Depression

Sponsored by Charles County Public Schools'
Department of Student Services
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Presenters and Objectives

- ▶ Monica Moore, EdS
 - ▶ School Psychologist, Thomas Stone High School
 - ▶ Beila Lugo, MS, NCSP
 - ▶ Mental Health Coordinator/School Psychologist
 - ▶ Maria "Maggie" O'Connor-Buckingham, Spanish Interpreter
- In this workshop, we are going to help you better understand the symptoms of depression. We will look at depression itself, and we will touch upon what happens when the symptoms are left untreated.
 - The good news is that by getting a better understanding of depression, you can learn how to protect your child and others should you need tools.

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Depression

- Being a tween, teen and/or young adult can be hard.
- Life throws many curve balls, some of which can be very challenging.
- Some of those curveballs can trigger a response that isn't easy to shake off.
- When life feels heavy and it is hard to smile, you may be experiencing symptoms of depression. A symptom is sign that something bigger MAY be going on.

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Depression

- Let's get started ...
- Most young adults admit that they have felt depressed at some point in their lives.
- With so many young people admitting this truth, we feel it is important to take the curtains down and shine the light on this very common and normal part of life.

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If at any time you or your child needs support, please feel free to do any of the following:

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- Call a hotline:
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- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
- National Hopeline Network: 1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433)
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Depression

- Depression can cause a person to feel alone and like no one understands. In reality, many people's experiences are similar.
- More people understand than you may realize.
- Talking to someone can help gain some clarity and feel more hopeful about the future.
- With that said, let's get into the workshop.

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Depression

- Defining Things
 - To make sure we are all on the same page, let's define our topic ...

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How would you define depression?

Depression is:

- Feeling a loss of interest, intense sadness, or like you can't feel joy for an extended period of time.
- People who are depressed know that something deep down is very wrong.
- Depression is a medical illness. To be diagnosed with depression, one must meet certain criteria and have a professional make that call.
- Depression is much more than feeling sad.

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Depressive Symptoms (symptom is a sign of something)

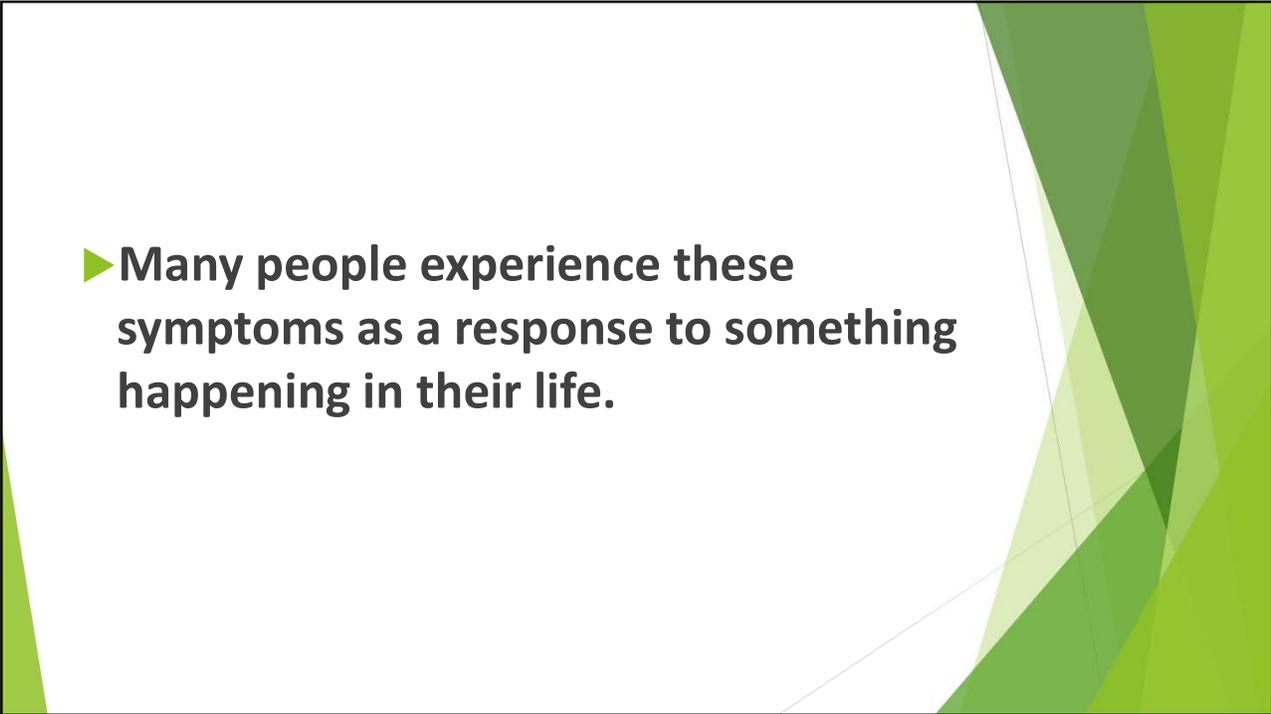
- Depressive symptoms are feelings that come and go. This is the category in which most fall.
- Depression and depressive symptoms can both get in the way of performing normal tasks.
- Tasks such hanging out with your friends, spending time with family , going to school or work, taking part in other normal daily routines.

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Depression often includes one or more of these other symptoms too:

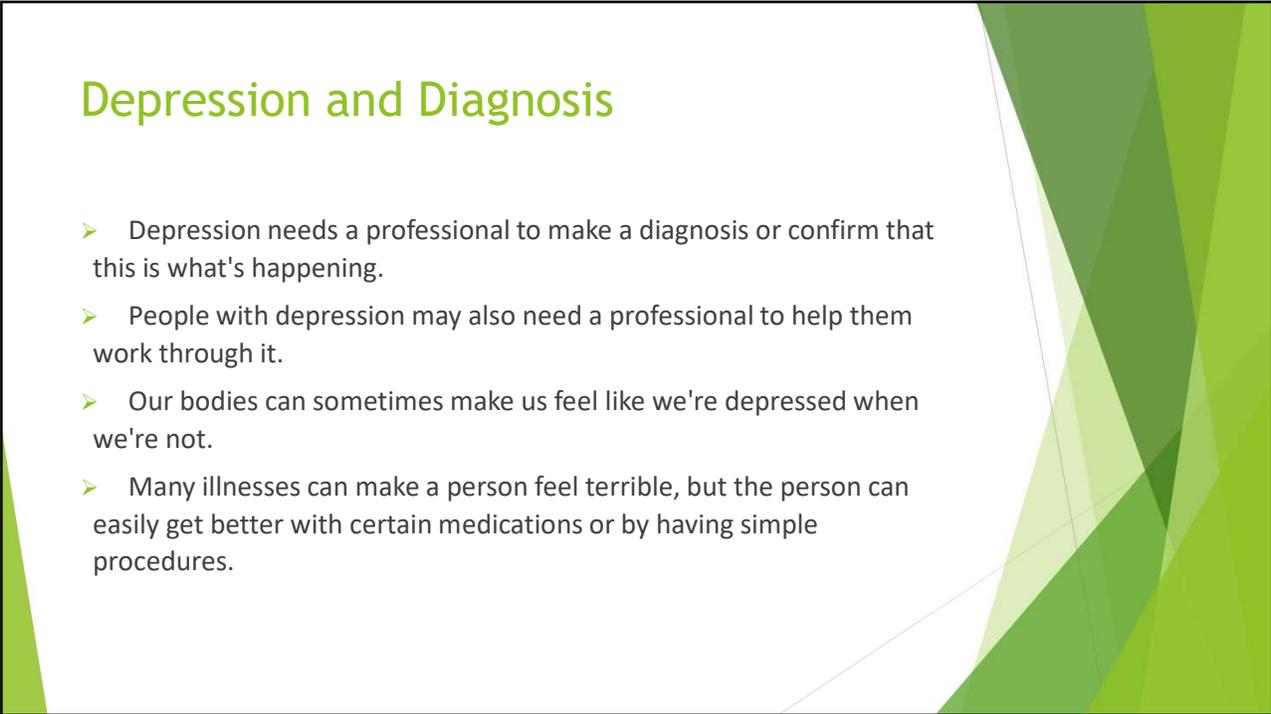
- Sleeping more or less than normal
- Feeling irritable
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Withdrawing from activities
- Not liking one's self

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- ▶ **Many people experience these symptoms as a response to something happening in their life.**

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Depression and Diagnosis

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- Depression needs a professional to make a diagnosis or confirm that this is what's happening.
 - People with depression may also need a professional to help them work through it.
 - Our bodies can sometimes make us feel like we're depressed when we're not.
 - Many illnesses can make a person feel terrible, but the person can easily get better with certain medications or by having simple procedures.

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A look at the numbers:

- Almost one in three young adults today say they feel depressed.
- Only ½ of people in the US go on to get the help they need.
- That means that the majority of people suffering are doing so when they don't have to.
- Colleges report:
 - 36% of students struggle with depression.
 - When people receive help, either through therapy, medication (if needed), or through learning new coping strategies, they go on to have healthy, happy lives.

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What are the symptoms of depression?

- Difficulty sleeping
- Sleeping too much and still feeling tired all the time
- Difficulty concentrating
- Increased sadness
- Increased anger
- Increased frustration
- Loss of interest in things that were once enjoyable
- Changes in appetite (eating a lot more or a lot less)
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Feeling like a burden upon others
- Feeling worthless

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Let's take a look at a real life example of depression.

Andre was excited about graduation and had a job lined up. He described life as "Good. No problems." As the summer continued however, Andre began to feel more and more down "for no reason." His new boss called him to get his schedule set for work. Even though Andre had been excited about his job, he suddenly didn't have any interest in starting. Andre ignored the calls from his boss. He had worked so hard and had been very excited to take his next step. Instead, he stayed in his room and let his first week of work roll on by. His parents could see something was wrong, and they allowed him to stay home for the summer hoping he would get help. He continued to stay home, but didn't get help. Andre's friends, his family, and even his high school coach tried to motivate Andre to get help. He refused.

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What causes depression?

- We will look at four big causes ...
 - 1. Stressors
 - 2. Harmful
 - 3. Character Traits
 - 4. A Big Life Change

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Stressors

- Stressors: Things, people, or situations that cause stress.
- Everyone has different stressors in their life.
- The biggest stressor in causing depression though, is stress that comes from relationships.
- These are also known as "interpersonal stressors."
- These stressors can happen at home, or they can happen with peers.
- Losing a relationship or having conflict or tension in a relationship can cause interpersonal stress.

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Harmful Situations

- Harmful situations are ones in which a person is a victim of something. They are involved in something bad, and they have no control over it.
- Examples:
 - Violence
 - Poverty
 - Neglect
 - Abuse
 - Having poor family support
 - Chronic pain or ongoing illness

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Character Traits

- Character traits is how a person feels about themselves and how they handle challenges
- Examples:
 - Low self esteem
 - Inability to manage moods
 - Negative thinking
 - Low body image
 - Low social supports
 - Negative social supports

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A Big Life Change

- Big life changes can be:
 - Divorce
 - Change in school
 - Moving away
- Even "good" changes can cause depressive symptoms:
 - Going to college
 - Starting a new job

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Depression is a tricky thing.

- ▶ When people need the most help, they have the least motivation to look for it.
- ▶ There are solutions.
- ▶ The tools for getting through depression can be very helpful.
- ▶ Everyone goes through hard times - these tools can help anyone, even if they don't have depression.

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Every person is different.

- Your child may have many factors in his/her life that can cause depression. Having many factors does NOT mean he/she will go on to develop depression.
- Every person is different.
- Some people will, some won't.
- The truth is anyone can be affected.
- Depression is not the result of being weak or damaged. It is the result of being human.
- Combating depression and dealing with stressors is possible.

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Body-Feelings Connection

- The body reacts to our feelings before our minds even know what's going on
- When we feel intense emotions, our bodies send signals.
- Teaching individuals to observe those signals is important.
- Holding onto them is not.
- Diya's story

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The Science Behind Depression

- It's important to know that this is REAL, and that you can make changes!
- We tend to think about emotions (feelings) as coming from our "hearts." But while depression may feel like "just" emotions, a lot of what's going on is actually physical (happening in the body).
- It's also happening in the physical brain.
- Depression is not just feelings.
- There are three main pieces within the body that can cause depression.
 - Serotonin- a brain messenger
 - Brain structures - each has an important job
 - Genetics - your personal make-up

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Serotonin

- ▶ Serotonin "ser-oh-tone-in" is the "feel good" chemical in your brain. It helps send messages to different parts of the brain and keeps your moods in check.
- ▶ You are born with serotonin, and your body continues to make it throughout your life.
- ▶ When serotonin levels are low, the brain can't balance your moods
- ▶ This can result in depression.

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Brain Structure

- ▶ The parts of the brain that are in charge of memory and emotions are necessary to feel good.
- ▶ Science has shown that these parts of the brain can actually shrink in people with depression.
- ▶ Stress makes a difference too.
- ▶ Not all types of depression need medication.

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Genetics

- ▶ Genetic depression is different.
- ▶ Children with a depressed parent are three times more at risk of becoming depressed than a child without a depressed parent.
- ▶ If it runs in the family, risk is higher.

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Action Steps

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Look out for warning signs and seek help immediately

2

Help build coping skills and positive supports for your child

3

Talk to your child about depression and be ready to listen when your child

ACTs

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What keeps some students from getting help:

- Most students state that they didn't want to tell anyone how they felt for fear of being judged.
- Others state that they hoped it would "just go away."
- Some students said that they felt so hopeless that they thought telling someone would only make things worse.

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Managing reactions

You don't need to be an expert or have all the answers.



Give yourself permission to be human.



Seek out resources

It's common to feel uncomfortable with this topic.

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Talking to your tween/teen

- **Take some time to start a conversation about mental health.**
- This can be tough since we don't usually talk about mental health like physical health. Feelings of depression or anxiety are often hidden because youth are confused, embarrassed, or ashamed.
- **Make sure your child knows they can talk to you about mental health.**
 - **Ask open-ended questions.** Let your child steer the conversation to what they want to talk about.
 - **Don't rush to solve their problems.** Instead, ask what they think would help a situation.
 - **Be available and make sure your child knows it.** "I'm around if you want to talk later" may help.

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Tips for getting your child to talk

- **Child-led family meetings;** let your child set the agenda
- **Playing a game;** this makes young people more comfortable talking about a difficult topic
- If the subject comes up in a movie or TV show, have a discussion about it
- **Out for a walk;** the relaxed atmosphere can make it easier for some children to open up
- **Taking a drive;** sometimes it's easier to talk about difficult topics without eye contact
- Continuing the conversation or have multiple mini conversations on a regular basis instead of one big talk
- **Enlist other trusted adults;** sometimes a grandparent or trusted aunt/uncle can break through when parents have been shut out

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Building protective factors

Encourage: connection to school, participation in activities, and strong connections to friends.

Let your child know you are always ready to listen - whether they are concerned about a friend or struggling themselves; they do not need to worry alone.



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Building Coping Skills

A coping skill helps people deal with unpleasant feelings and hard times.



Exercise



Writing down or identifying what he/she is grateful for



Talk to friends and family



Listen to music



What are your teen's favorite coping skills?

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Depression is treatable.

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Contact Information

- ▶ Monica Moore
- ▶ School Psychologist
- ▶ mmoore@ccboe.com
- ▶ Google Voice Number 443-295-3541
- ▶ Beila Lugo
- ▶ Mental Health Coordinator/School Psychologist
- ▶ blugo@ccboe.com
- ▶ 301-392-7507

Your feedback is important to us. Please use the QR code to complete a survey or go to <https://forms.office.com/r/nEH1z3S2Fd>

