Santa Paula Unified School District

Mental Health Matters

October 2024

Depression Awareness Month

Recognizing Adolescent Depression

Adolescent depression is increasing at an alarming rate. Recent surveys indicate that as many as one in five teens suffers from clinical depression. This is a serious problem that calls for prompt, appropriate treatment. Depression can take several forms, including bipolar disorder (formally called manic-depression), which is a condition that alternates between periods of euphoria and depression.

Depression can be difficult to diagnose in teens because adults may expect teens to act moody. Also, adolescents do not always understand or express their feelings very well. They may not be aware of the symptoms of depression and may not seek help.

These symptoms may indicate depression, particularly when they last for more than two weeks:

Poor performance in school

Withdrawal from friends and activities

Sadness and hopelessness

Lack of enthusiasm, energy or motivation

Anger and rage

Overreaction to criticism

Feelings of being unable to satisfy ideals

Poor self-esteem or guilt

Indecision, lack of concentration or forgetfulness

Restlessness and agitation

Changes in eating or sleeping patterns

Substance abuse

Problems with authority

Suicidal thoughts or actions

Teens may experiment with drugs or alcohol or become sexually promiscuous to avoid feelings of depression. Teens also may express their depression through hostile, aggressive, risk-taking behavior. But such behaviors only lead to new problems, deeper levels of depression and destroyed relationships with friends, family, law enforcement or school officials.

Full article found at https://mhanational.org/depression-teens-0

Need Mental Health Support?

OPTUM EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP) OFFERS **FREE CONFIDENTIAL HELP**

Call toll-free

888-444-8624 any time

OR

Go to www.liveandworkwell.com and browse as a guest using code **CSEBO**



SPUSD

This newsletter is brought to you by the Mental Health Counselors:

Lisa de la O, LMFT:
LdelaO@santapaulausd.org

Rachael Forbes, LMFT:
RForbes@santapaulausd.org

Liset Llerenas , APCC:
LLlerenas@santapaulausd.org

Deborah Ujfalusy, LCSW:
DUjfalusy@santapaulausd.org

In case of an Emergency:

- **911 For Immediate Support**
- **Ventura County Crisis Team (866) 998-2243 –(24 hours)**



Coping Skills for Depression: 10 Strategies & How to Use Them

1. Ground Yourself by Tapping Into Your 5 Senses

The 54321 method is a grounding technique that helps you bring yourself back to the present moment using your five senses. A common feature of depression is dwelling on the past and becoming so stuck on what you cannot change that you struggle to focus on the present. Accordingly, grounding in the moment diverts one's attention from the negative thoughts and emotions keeping them stuck.

Here's how to do the 54321 method:

Look around and name five things you can see

Focus on four things you can physically touch and feel

Pay attention to three things you can hear in your environment

Notice two things you can smell

Finally, identify one thing you can taste or think about your favorite taste

It's a simple yet effective way to reduce anxiety, promote mindfulness to relieve depression, and regain a sense of calm.

2. Practice Deep Breathing

Deep breathing exercises, such as diaphragmatic breathing or box breathing, can help activate your body's relaxation response and reduce symptoms of depression. At a physiological level, activating the parasympathetic nervous system slows everything down. As breathing slows down and becomes more controlled, so does blood flow, yielding a calming effect.

By focusing on your breath, you distract yourself from whatever it is that is depressing you and bring calm and balance to your mind. Deep breathing may be done as a standalone coping skill or one used in combination with other strategies.

3. Engage in Regular Exercise

Physical activity releases endorphins, which are natural mood boosters. Regular exercise can improve your mood and overall well-being, whether it's walking, jogging, yoga, or any other form of physical activity. Research has indicated that exercise can be even more effective at reducing mild depressive symptoms than medication or cognitive behavioral therapy.4

Exercise may be even more fulfilling by engaging with others. Working out with a friend may not only be more fun but also help hold you accountable to follow through.

4. Connect With Supportive People

Reach out to trusted friends, family members, or support groups. Sharing your feelings with others who understand and care can provide emotional support and help alleviate the sense of isolation often associated with depression. Being around supportive people can make a substantial difference. While speaking about what is hurting you helps, even if the conversation is about something else but provides some relief or laughter, there is an immense benefit.

Full article found at https://www.choosingtherapy.com/coping-skills-for-depression/