

PARENTAL PSYCHOEDUCATION PACKET

DEPRESSION

Parenting a child with depression can be challenging and overwhelming. It's important to remember that **depression is a real and treatable condition**, and with the right support, your child can overcome it.

This packet aims to provide you with valuable information on **understanding depression in children and how you can support your child through their journey.**

WHAT IS DEPRESSION IN CHILDREN?

1

EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS

Persistent sadness, irritability, hopelessness, and feeling empty.

A child may exhibit signs of sadness, loneliness, unhappiness, or grouchiness, which can persist for weeks or months, with increased crying and tantrums.



I CAN'T DO ANYTHING RIGHT...

2

BEHAVIORAL SYMPTOMS

Withdrawal from friends and family, loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy, or difficulty concentrating.

a. Being self-critical. Depressed kids may frequently complain.

b. Low energy and motivation. Depression can lead to difficulty with schoolwork, finding tasks overwhelming, and appearing disinterested.

c. Decreased enjoyment. Lose interest in activities they once enjoyed, like playing with friends or hobbies.



3

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

Changes in appetite or weight, fatigue, sleep disturbances, and physical complaints like headaches or stomachaches.

Sleep and eating changes. Kids may not sleep well or seem tired, even if they get enough sleep. Some may not feel like eating. Others may overeat.



UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION IN CHILDREN:

Depression in children can be caused by a combination of **genetic, biological, environmental, and psychological factors**. Some common factors that may contribute to depression in children include:

GENETIC PREDISPOSITION

Children with a family history of depression are more likely to experience depression themselves



BRAIN CHEMISTRY

Imbalances in brain chemicals can contribute to the development of depression



LIFE EVENTS

Stressful life events such as trauma, loss of a loved one, bullying, academic pressure, or family conflicts can trigger or exacerbate depression in children.



PERSONALITY TRAITS

Certain personality traits, such as, low self-esteem, perfectionism, or a tendency to worry, may increase the risk of depression in children.



HOW CAN PARENTS HELP?

As a parent, you play a crucial role in supporting your child through their journey with depression. Here are **11 tips to help you provide the support your child needs:**

1 TALK WITH YOUR CHILD ABOUT SADNESS AND DEPRESSION

Kids might not know why they are so sad and why things seem so hard. Let them know you see that they're going through a hard time and that you're there to help. Listen, comfort, offer your support, and show love.

2 VALIDATE THEIR FEELINGS

Let your child know that it's okay to feel sad or overwhelmed and that you are there to support them.

3 OPEN COMMUNICATION

a. Create a safe and supportive environment where your child feels comfortable discussing their feelings and struggles.

b. *Never push your child to share;* instead, encourage other forms of creative expression like painting, crafts, or journaling their thoughts.

4 BE PATIENT AND KIND

When your child acts moody or difficult, try to stay patient. Often, it helps to connect with your child calmly and then guide them to better behavior. Instead of feeling bad, this lets kids feel proud of doing better. It lets them see that you're proud of them, too.

5 ENCOURAGE PROFESSIONAL HELP

Encourage your child to talk to a mental health professional, such as a therapist or counselor, who can provide them with the support and guidance they need.

6 MODEL HEALTHY COPING STRATEGIES

Show your child healthy ways to cope with stress, such as exercise, relaxation techniques (such as deep breathing), hobbies, and spending time with loved ones, and practice them together.

DAD, I'M FEELING REALLY SAD TODAY...

THAT'S OK! FEELING SAD IS NORMAL. WHAT DO YOU THINK MIGHT CHEER YOU UP?

I DON'T KNOW, MAYBE DRAWING OR PLAYING WITH MY TOYS.

GOOD IDEA! DOING WHAT YOU LOVE CAN HELP. REMEMBER, FEELING SAD IS OKAY, BUT THERE ARE WAYS TO FEEL BETTER.



HOW CAN PARENTS HELP?

7 MAINTAIN ROUTINES

- a. Establishing a consistent daily routine can provide structure and stability for your child, which can be especially helpful when they are feeling overwhelmed
- b. Help your child stay engaged throughout the day with structure and an exciting routine that has a mix of activities – including fun, leisure, play, learning, daily chores, and time for family, sleeping, and rest.



9 MONITOR THEIR WELL-BEING

Keep an eye on your child's behavior, mood, and any changes in their daily functioning. If you notice any warning signs of depression, help your child to engage in coping strategies.

10 ENCOURAGE POSITIVE HABITS

Help your child stick to regular eating and sleeping habits and stay active. Physical activity and music are both great ways to boost their mood.

11 TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Remember to take care of your own mental and emotional well-being. Parenting a child with depression can be stressful, so make sure to seek support for yourself when needed.

8 ENJOY TIME TOGETHER

Spend time with your child doing things you both can enjoy. Go for a walk, play a game, cook, read stories, make a craft, watch a funny movie. Spend time outdoors if you can. These activities gently encourage positive moods and can help you and your child feel close



Parenting a child with depression can be challenging, but with patience, understanding, and support, you can help your child overcome their struggles and lead a fulfilling life. Remember that you are not alone, and there are resources available to help you and your child navigate this journey. By working together as a family and accessing appropriate support, you can empower your child to manage their depression and thrive.