

DEPRESSION

Sometimes when we feel sad or disappointed, we say we're "depressed." Everyone feels the blues now and then. When something discouraging happens--like if someone you love lets you down, or if other people misunderstand you, or if you've done something you know you shouldn't have done--it's normal to feel bad for awhile, until you get the problem resolved, or you learn to cope with the new situation.

It's also normal to have sad feelings when you suffer from loss, tragedy, or major changes in your life (see also GRIEF AND LOSS, page 18.)

But if you feel consistently "depressed" every day, over a period of two weeks or more, the smart thing to do is to talk to someone about it. Part of being depressed is that you can't recognize all of the changes occurring in your life, don't know where to get help, or how to feel better. **Tell your parents, a teacher, your school counselor or another adult.**

WARNING SIGNS

- **Sleeping difficulties (too much or too little)**
- **Change in appetite (decrease or increase)**
- **Lack of interest in activities and friends**
- **Isolation and withdrawal**
- **Drop in grades**
- **Feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness, sadness**
- **Tearfulness and crying**
- **Irritability and signs of frustration**
- **Repeated health complaints (headaches, stomach aches, low back pain, fatigue)**
- **Alcohol and drug use**
- **Suicidal thoughts or behaviors**



Remember, ALL of these symptoms do NOT need to be present to diagnose depression. If you recognize even a few of these symptoms in yourself or a friend, **talk to an adult.**

Don't be embarrassed or ashamed if you feel this way. Research shows that depression results from biochemical imbalances in the brain, and it can be treated successfully. **YOU CAN FEEL BETTER**, often with a combination of modern medications and counseling. But untreated depression can be a very serious illness. It can even be life-threatening, because some people with major depression feel like committing suicide.

For information about SUICIDE, see page 56.

For information about COUNSELING, see page 9.

For more information about DEPRESSION, search the NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH website at:

www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/depression.cfm.