

# Parenting Tips

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## Your Teen and Depression

Teens can be moody and sometimes act in questionable ways. It's part of being an adolescent. So, how can parents tell when their child's behavior or emotions are a sign of something more serious than just typical teenage development? Depression in teens often looks different than in adults and can lead many parents to overlook or dismiss important warning signs believed to be something else.

### **Possible Signs of Teenage Depression:**

- Frequent physical symptoms, such as headaches or stomach aches
- Frequent absences from school or unusually poor school performance
- Extreme outbursts of anger, uncontrollable crying, unexplained irritability or hostility toward others
- Chronic boredom
- Lack of interest in friends
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Isolating from others or sudden and prolonged lack of communication
- Fear or preoccupation with death
- Extreme sensitivity to rejection or failure

## What Can Parents Do?

- **Ask your teen about his or her mood and concerning behaviors.** Most teenagers are eager to talk if parents show they will listen.
- **Validate your teen's feelings.** Let your child know that you are here for him or her, even if what your teen has to say is difficult to hear.
- **Make an appointment with your child's doctor** to make sure that there is not a medical reason for your child's change in behavior.
- **Find a therapist with experience and training working with teenagers and schedule an appointment for your child.** Be involved in your teen's treatment and communicate regularly with the therapist about his or her progress.
- **Take suicidal comments seriously.** Statements such as, "I wish I were dead" need further exploration to determine how at-risk your child may be to act on these feelings. Consult a professional as soon as possible for guidance.
- Resources for immediate evaluation include Ingraham's crisis hotline at 774-HELP or your nearest Emergency Room. Do not hesitate to access these resources if you have immediate safety concerns about your child.

Parenting Tips are produced by  
Community Counseling Center's  
Education for Living program.  
For more information call 207.874.1030.



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343 Forest Avenue, Portland , Maine 04101

**tel** 207.874.1030    **tty** 207.874.1043

**fax** 207.874.1044    [info@commcc.org](mailto:info@commcc.org)

[www.commcc.org](http://www.commcc.org)