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## Video Short

### **Teen Depression Can Rebound By CWK Network Producer**

*“Just this gloom was like hanging over my head and I knew something wasn’t right but I wasn’t exactly sure what it was.”*  
-- Amy, 16 years old

According to a new study from Duke University researchers, most depressed adolescents and teenagers who get treatment with drugs, therapy or both will get some relief, but nearly half will relapse within five years. Females are by far at greatest risk. Why are so many kids suffering and what can parents do to help?

“A lot of people I know get depressed all the time about lots of stuff,” says 15-year-old Meagan.

“It’s like everything’s all on your shoulders and you have to take everything at once,” says Meredith, 14.

Sixteen-year-old Amy agrees, “Just this gloom was like hanging over my head and I knew something wasn’t right but I wasn’t exactly sure what it was.”

“My parents went through an awful divorce my ninth grade year and I was devastated, worse than my heart could ever imagine,” says 18-year-old Brittany, “and it hurts a lot, and I still hurt to this day and I’m a senior in high school.”

The symptoms vary: some kids may be lethargic and withdrawn; others may show agitation and frustration, even aggression. Often, there is a drop in grades. And sometimes these symptoms can cause parents to punish the child, instead of providing treatment.

“Rather than thinking of children’s misbehaviors as discipline problems or misbehaviors as deliberate,” says psychologist Sunaina Jain, Ph.D., “it’s important to see them as communications from the child.”

Experts say lots of kids experience depression or anxiety, often mild and temporary, but *not always*. And that’s why parents need to constantly check their child’s emotional pulse.

“You know it doesn’t take hours and hours. Even a few minutes of checking in with each other every day is a great way of saying you know I’m here, I’m interested in you,” says Jain.

### **What We Need to Know**

All teens experience ups and downs. Every day poses a new test of their emotional stability – fighting with a friend, feeling peer pressure to “fit in” with a particular crowd or experiencing anxiety over a failed quiz – all of which can lead to normal feelings of sadness or grief. These feelings are usually brief and subside with time, unlike depression, which is more than feeling blue, sad or down in the dumps once in a while.

According to the Nemours Foundation, depression is a strong mood involving sadness, discouragement, despair or hopelessness that lasts for weeks, months or even longer. It also interferes with a person’s ability to participate in normal activities. Often, depression in teens is overlooked because parents and teachers feel that unhappiness or “moodiness” is typical in young people. They blame hormones or other factors for teens’ feelings of sadness or grief, which leaves many teens undiagnosed and untreated for their illness.

Certain risk factors may be associated with developing the disorder. Johns Hopkins University cites the following risk factors for becoming depressed:

- Children under stress who have experienced loss or who suffer attention, learning or conduct disorders are more susceptible to depression.
- Girls are more likely than boys to develop depression.
- Youth, particularly younger children who develop depression, are likely to have a family history of the disorder.
- Prolonged sadness or unexplained crying spells

- Significant changes in appetite and sleep patterns
- Irritability, anger, worry, agitation or anxiety
- Pessimism or indifference
- Loss of energy or persistent lethargy
- Feelings of guilt and worthlessness
- Inability to concentrate and indecisiveness
- Inability to take pleasure in former interests or social withdrawal
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Recurring thoughts of death or suicide

It is important to acknowledge that teens may experiment with drugs or alcohol or become sexually promiscuous to avoid feelings of depression. According to Mental Health America, teens may also express their depression through other hostile, aggressive, risk-taking behaviors. These behaviors will only lead to new problems, deeper levels of depression and destroyed relationships with friends and family, as well as difficulties with law enforcement or school officials.

If you feel depressed, it's best to do something about it — depression doesn't just go away on its own. In addition to getting help from a doctor or therapist, Kids Health suggests five ways to fight depression:

- **Exercise.** Take a 15- to 30-minute brisk walk every day — or dance, jog, or bike. People who are depressed may not feel much like being active. But make yourself do it anyway (ask a friend to exercise with you if you need to be motivated). Once you get in the exercise habit, it won't take long to notice a difference in your mood.
- **Nurture yourself with good nutrition.** Depression can affect appetite. Proper nutrition can influence a person's mood and energy. So eat plenty of fruits and vegetables and get regular meals (even if you don't feel hungry, try to eat something light, like a piece of fruit, to keep you going).
- **Identify troubles, but don't dwell on them.** Try to identify any situations that have contributed to your depression. When you know what's got you feeling blue and why, talk about it with a caring friend. Once you air out these thoughts and feelings, turn your attention to something positive. Take action to solve problems. Ask for help from family and friends if you need it.
- **Express yourself.** With depression, a person's creativity and sense of fun may seem blocked. Take time to play with a friend or a pet, or do something fun for yourself. Find something to laugh about — a funny movie, perhaps. Laughter helps lighten your mood.
- **Look on the bright side.** Depression affects a person's thoughts, making everything seem dismal, negative, and hopeless. If depression has you noticing only the negative, make an effort to notice the good things in life. Try to notice one thing, then try to think of one more. Consider your strengths, gifts, or blessings. Most of all, don't forget to be patient with yourself. Depression takes time to heal.

## Resources

[American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry](#)

[American Foundation for Suicidal Prevention](#)

[Everyday Health on How Can I Tell if My Teen is Depressed](#)

[Mental Health America](#)

[Nemours Foundation Kids' Health – Five Ways to Fight Depression](#)

[Duke Study on Teen Depression](#)

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