



Women's Multicultural Resource & Counselling Centre

Adolescent Depression

The adolescent years can be extremely tough and depression affects adolescents far more often than many of us realize. In fact, it's estimated that one in five adolescents from all walks of life will suffer from depression at some point during their adolescent years. However, while depression is highly treatable, most adolescents who are experiencing depression do not receive the appropriate help they need. When assessing and treating Black adolescents' depression, we need to pay particular attention to their



complaints about interpersonal struggles and physical discomforts (1). Many rebellious and unhealthy behaviors or attitudes in adolescents can be indications of depression. The following are some of the ways in which adolescents “act out” in an attempt to cope with their emotional pain. This is not an exhaustive list; however, you might notice some or all of the following:

- Drug and alcohol abuse. The use alcohol or drugs in an attempt to “self-medicate” their depression. Unfortunately, substance abuse only makes things worse.
- Problems at school. Depression can cause low energy and concentration difficulties. At school, this may lead to poor attendance, a drop in grades, or frustration with schoolwork in a formerly good student.
- Low self-esteem. Depression can trigger and intensify feelings of ugliness, shame, failure, and unworthiness.
- Irresponsible & reckless behavior. Adolescents may engage in dangerous or high-risk behaviors, such binge drinking, reckless driving and unsafe sex.
- Aggressive outbursts. Some adolescents may become aggressive and start to display violence towards object and/or others.

Adolescent depression is also associated with a number of other mental health problems, including eating disorders, anxiety and self-injury. While depression can cause tremendous pain for your adolescent—and disrupt everyday family life—there are plenty of approaches and tools you can do to help your child start to feel better. The first step is to learn what teen depression looks like.

Did you know:

- Approximately 5% of male youth and 12% of female youth, age 12 to 19, have experienced a major depressive episode.
- The total number of 12-19-year-olds in Canada at risk for developing depression is a staggering 3.2 million.
- Once depression is recognized, help can make a difference for 80% of people who are affected, allowing them to get back to their regular activities.

If you are a youth who feels they might be experiencing depression please know that it does not have to feel this way. You would be amazed of the various approaches and strategies available to you.

If you are parent, please be mindful of your bias regarding mental health. The way you talk about mental illness and receiving help can be a big contributing force which either directs your youth to getting help or living in shame and emotional pain.

For any support needed along the way please do not hesitate to reach out. We are here to serve you and our community.

WMMRC team