

COUNSELLOR'S REPORT:

DEPRESSION IN ADOLESCENTS

WHAT WE SHOULD KNOW AS PARENTS AND TEACHERS:

Depression is more than the typical mood swings of adolescence. Real depression is not atypical in adolescents; mood swings are. It is a long lasting, often recurring illness as real and debilitating as heart disease. There may be feelings of intense sadness, tiredness, and guilt. The person who is depressed feels lonely and isolated, helpless, worthless and lost. There is usually a combination of physical and psychological symptoms involved in a depressive episode. Adolescents under stress, who have experienced loss, or who have learning or behavioural disorders are at risk of suffering from depression.

SIGNS THAT MAY BE ASSOCIATED WITH DEPRESSION IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS:

If your adolescent has exhibited **four or more** of the following symptoms for **more than two weeks**, professional help should be considered:

- Persistent sadness
- An inability to enjoy things that previously brought enjoyment
- Outbursts of shouting, complaining, unexpected irritability, or crying
- Frequent vague, non-specific physical complaints such as headaches, muscle aches, stomach aches or tiredness
- Frequent absences from school or poor performance in school
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions, boredom
- Noticeable changes in eating or sleeping patterns – sleeping/eating too much or too little
- Talk of or efforts to run away from home
- Alcohol or substance abuse
- Social isolation, poor communication, difficulty with relationships
- Fear of death
- Extreme sensitivity to rejection or failure
- Reckless behaviour
- Frequent waking in the middle of the night
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Lack of energy, slowed thinking
- Feelings of inappropriate guilt and worthlessness

Prompt identification and treatment of depression can reduce its duration and severity and associated functional impairment.

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP:

- Talk with the Domremy College Counsellor
- Talk to your general practitioner for advice about local adolescent psychologists or paediatricians
- Call the Children's Hospital at Westmead for advice and information (9845 2446)
- Call your local community health centre (eg: The Adolescent Mental Health Team at Glebe Community Health Centre – 8585 5000)
- Call the Transcultural Mental Health Centre for advice in your language – (9840 3800)
- Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 (free call)
- Parentline: 132 055 (9:30am – 4:30pm Mon – Sat)