

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

- Depression is a real, treatable medical condition.
- Regular sadness and depression are not the same; depression is an intense feeling of sadness, hopelessness, anger or frustration that lasts for weeks, months or longer.
- These feelings can make it hard to function as you normally would. For example, you might find it more difficult to participate in activities you usually enjoy.
- Depression can make you feel like it is hard to enjoy life or get through the day.

SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

- Feeling sad, empty or hopeless more often than not
- Feelings of irritation
- Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep or sleeping more than normal
- Feeling very tired or having little energy
- Feeling worthless or very guilty
- Having trouble concentrating
- Thinking about dying or suicide
- Changes in appetite



WHO EXPERIENCES DEPRESSION?

- Up to 9% of youth experience at least one major depressive episode by age 14. Adolescents are even more likely to experience depression.
- Girls experience depression at roughly twice the rate of boys.
- Depressed children often present as more irritable than sad or down.

RESOURCES

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH): www.nimh.nih.gov

TIPS FOR PARENTS

- **Show your love.** Children need love, empathy, and respect. Let them know you care and that their feelings are important. Just be present, sit with them **and reassure that you understand how they feel.**
- **Stick to a routine.** Schedules and routines create a sense of structure and security. Make things seem normal- even though they may not feel like doing activities.
- **Focus on the positive communication.** Track your ratio of negative to positive comments to your child. Your goal should be 1 negative to 5 positives.
- **Develop a positive environment.** Create a positive atmosphere to help your child relax. Make a list of fun things to do together and follow through with them.
- **Take care of yourself.** Find a support group, exercise, or hire a babysitter so you can get out. You also have to take care of yourself when taking care of your child.
- **Find treatment for your child.** They may benefit from therapy/counseling and medications. Talk with your doctor to decide what will work best for your family.
- **Get help.** If your child expresses thoughts about wanting to kill or hurt themselves, or is making concerning statements, call 911 or bring your child to the nearest emergency department. These feelings/thoughts can be serious.
- **Assure your child.** Let your child know you are going to help them to feel better and that therapy, activity, and medications can help.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- *Depressed Child: A Parent's Guide for Rescuing Kids*, by Douglas A. Riley
- *Help me, I'm sad: Recognizing, Treating and Preventing Childhood Depression and Adolescent Depression* by David G. Fassler and Lynne S Dumas
- *Lonely, Sad and Angry: How to Help Your Unhappy Child*, by Barbara D. Ingersoll
- *Raising Depression-Free Children: A Parent's Guide to Prevention and Early Intervention*, by Kathleen Panula Hockey
- *The Childhood Depression Sourcebook*, by Jeffrey A. Miller