

Accept your child's feelings on his or her own terms

Sometimes parents are afraid to talk about their feelings or ask their child how he or she is feeling. However, if you don't openly talk about depression or bullying, your child may feel even more alone.

Tell them you care

"I love you."

"You are important to me."

"I care about your feelings."

Say you are concerned

"I'm worried because I've noticed you've been crying a lot lately."

"I'm concerned because it seems that you are feeling angry and unhappy these days."

"I'm sad because you don't have as much energy to do the things you used to enjoy doing, like hanging out with your friends..."

"I worry about your safety when you..."

Understand their feelings

Keep your questions open-ended, rather than questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no. Say things like:

"Sometimes when people are depressed they feel sad, angry, or alone, and they may want to cry all day. How have you been feeling lately?"

Once your child begins to open up, you can make a simple statement like,

"Tell me more about that..."

Work together

Most children and teens with depression feel alone and lonely. You can reassure your child that you are going to be there for them by saying things like:

"You are not alone. I'm going to help you work through this problem."

"We can handle this together. I'm going to stick by you."

Be clear and honest

Answer questions as honestly as possible based upon what is age appropriate.

Example for younger child:

"You are going to see a doctor who helps people with their feelings. Some doctors fix broken bones, other help you with your feelings."

Sometimes medications are also necessary to help people feel better. However, counseling and talking about your feelings is very important as well. Some peoples' brain chemistry needs adjustment. Antidepressants help to adjust the chemicals in the brain to make people with depression feel better.

Accept

Acceptance is key to moving forward. Accept a mental illness just as it is, an illness.

Educate yourself to find out as much as you can about the illness and the treatment options available. Understand the treatment options and follow through with regular doctor appointments.