



Understanding Depression

A simple Guide for Students (& Parents)

What Is Depression?

Depression is more than feeling sad for a day or two.
It is a mental health condition that affects:

- how you feel
- how you think
- how your body feels
- how you act

It can make everyday things feel harder.

Common signs:

- Feeling sad, empty, or numb
- Irritability or anger
- Low energy or always tired
- Loss of interest in things you used to enjoy
- Changes in sleep or appetite
- Trouble focusing
- Feeling “not good enough”

 Parent Tips:

- Look for changes in behavior, not just sadness.
- Irritability in teens is often a depression signal.
- Avoid saying “just be positive” → try:
“I’m here and I want to understand.”

Depression Is NOT a Weakness

Depression is connected to:

- brain chemistry
- stress levels
- life events
- thinking patterns
- physical health

It is real, common, and treatable.



Parent Tips:

- Treat depression like any medical condition.
 - Reduce shame → avoid “lazy,” “dramatic,” or “attention-seeking.”
 - Praise effort, not just results.
-



Common Challenges for Students



School & Motivation

Depression can make:

- homework feel overwhelming
- focusing very hard
- grades drop
- school avoidance increase

Student Strategy:

- ✓ Break work into tiny steps
- ✓ Use a timer (10-minute start)
- ✓ Ask for help early



Parent Tips:

- Focus on support before consequences
 - Collaborate with the school for:
 - reduced workload
 - extra time
 - check-ins
 - Celebrate small wins.
-



Friends & Social Life

Depression may cause:

- isolating
- feeling misunderstood
- low energy to text or hang out
- comparing yourself to others

Student Strategy:

- ✓ Keep 1–2 safe people
- ✓ Choose low-energy hangouts (walk, music, gaming)



Parent Tips:

- Don't force large social events.
 - Support one safe friendship.
 - Normalize social “recharge time.”
-

Sleep & Energy

Depression can cause:

- sleeping too much
- trouble falling asleep
- constant exhaustion

Student Strategy:

- ✓ Consistent sleep & wake time
- ✓ No screens 30–60 min before bed
- ✓ Morning light exposure



Parent Tips:

- Protect sleep routines.
- Watch for late-night isolation.
- Morning sunlight helps reset mood.



The Holistic Mood Reset

Small daily actions that help your brain feel better

These are not “cures” — they are brain supports.



Sunshine & Vitamin D

Sunlight helps your brain make mood chemicals.

Student Goal:

10–20 minutes outside daily

Ideas:

- Walk between classes
- Sit by a window
- Eat lunch outside



Parent Tips:

- Encourage outdoor time without calling it “exercise.”
- Morning light before school is powerful.



Movement = Natural Antidepressant

Movement releases:

- endorphins
- dopamine
- serotonin

Student Goal:

Start small → 5–10 minutes counts!

Examples:

- Walk the dog
- Dance to one song
- Stretch between classes
- Shoot hoops



Parent Tips:

- Focus on fun, not fitness.
 - Do movement together (connection boosts mood).
-



Food & Mood

Your brain needs fuel.

Helpful basics:

- Eat regularly (even small meals)
- Protein in the morning
- Drink water



Parent Tips:

- Depression lowers appetite → offer small, frequent options.
 - Avoid power struggles over food.
-



Calm Your Nervous System

When your body is calm → your mind feels better.

Student Tools:

- Deep breathing
- Music
- Weighted blanket
- Drawing
- Prayer/meditation



Parent Tips:

- Model calming skills.
 - Create a low-stress home recharge space.
-



Thought Patterns

Depression often tells lies like:

- “Nothing will get better”
- “I’m a failure”
- “No one cares”

These are symptoms — not facts.

Student Strategy:

Ask: “What would I say to a friend?”



Parent Tips:

- Don’t argue with the thought.
- Try: “That sounds really heavy. Tell me more.”



Asking for Help = Strength

Support can include:

- School counselor
- Therapist
- Trusted teacher
- Parent/caregiver
- Doctor

If you ever have thoughts of harming yourself → tell an adult immediately.



Parent Tips:

- Take all statements seriously.
- Thank your child for telling you.
- Stay calm and present.



What Helps Recovery

Recovery is not one big change — it is small daily steps:

- ✓ One healthy routine
- ✓ One safe person
- ✓ One coping skill
- ✓ One positive activity

That is how the brain heals.



For Students: Your Most Important Truth

You are not broken.

You are not alone.

Your brain is going through something treatable.

Things can get better — even if it doesn’t feel like it right now.



Parent Quick Support Checklist

- ✓ Listen more than you talk
 - ✓ Validate feelings first
 - ✓ Lower pressure during hard periods
 - ✓ Protect sleep
 - ✓ Encourage sunlight & movement
 - ✓ Stay connected to the treatment team
 - ✓ Notice effort, not just outcomes
-



When to Seek Extra Help

Reach out to a professional if:

- Symptoms last 2+ weeks
 - School refusal increases
 - Big personality changes
 - Talk of hopelessness or self-harm
-



Daily 5 for Mood

Try to get each day:

-  Sunlight
-  Movement
-  Water
-  Sleep
-  Connection

Small steps = real brain change