A Pervasive Problem

- One in 10 children & adolescents suffer from a mental illness severe enough to cause significant impairment
- WHO’s “Health for the world’s adolescents” report reveals that depression is the predominant cause of illness and disability for both boys and girls aged 10 to 19 years
- Estimates reach 15-20%; Female predominant (2:1 ratio)
- High co-occurrence with anxiety and substance abuse disorders
- 60%-80% of youth suffering from depression go undiagnosed and untreated

Your Unique Potential to Minister to Youth with Depression

- In relationship with youth
- Presence in a safe, loving, nonjudgmental environment
- Pre-established trust with individuals and their friends
- Understanding of the developmentally co-occurring adolescence and spiritual awakening
- Use of existing skill sets
**How is Depression Different from Stress?**

Typical changes in mood:

- Mood change is frequent and transient.
- Mood change is temporary and manageable.

Clinical Depression:

- Symptoms are too frequent, last too long, and are too intense for the person to manage.

**What to Look for**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>SYMPTOM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFFECTIVE</td>
<td>Anxiety, depressed mood, irritable mood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTIVATIONAL</td>
<td>Loss of interest, hopelessness, helpless, suicidal thoughts or acts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEHAVIORAL</td>
<td>Isolation, easily angered or agitated, oppositional, risk taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VEGETATIVE</td>
<td>Sleep problems, appetite change, fatigue, energy loss, motor agitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOMATIC</td>
<td>Headaches, stomachaches, fatigue, loss of appetite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGATIVE THINKING</td>
<td>Worthlessness, no friends, hopelessness, all or nothing talk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Symptom Differences According to Age**

- **Younger adolescents (10-14 years)**
  - more anxiety symptoms: fearfulness and nervousness
  - clinging behaviors
  - physical symptoms (headaches, stomachaches)

- **Older Adolescents (14 to 18 years)**
  - loss of interest and pleasure
  - more negative self thoughts
  - increased thoughts of death and suicide

**Depression and Suicide**

- Depression directly or indirectly results in 1700 teen suicides per year
- Suicidal individuals are often depressed; statistics show that 50% to 80% of people who attempt suicide have a history of depression or other mental illness
- Increase in completed suicide for 10-14 year olds and more completions in girls
Warning Signs of Suicide

- preoccupation with death related topics
- talking about suicide
- erratic behavior changes
- sudden changes in personality
- giving away special things
- taking excessive risks
- increased drug/alcohol use
- decreased interest in usual activities
- increased isolation
- feelings of guilt
- getting weapons or other means (pills)

Reacting to Suicidal Ideation

Do Not:
- Ignore or dismiss issue
- Act shocked or embarrassed
- Panic, preach, or patronize
- Challenge, debate, or bargain
- Promise to keep a secret

Do:
- Show you care – listen and be genuine
- Ask questions directly – be caring and non-confrontational
- Never leave a him/her alone
- Get others involved immediately

What Can You Do?

- Confidentiality
- Relationship
- Talking to parents
- Finding resources
- Making a referral
- Self care
Coping

• Feelings are ok to have and experience
• Believe you are worthy and capable of helping yourself
• Take an inventory: triggers? strengths? support?
• Develop positive habits: eating, sleeping, exercising
• Find ways to tolerate distress
• Mindfulness
• Prayer
• Service to others
• Believe in your best possible self
• Participate in positive youth development (youth groups!)

What Can We Model and Teach?

• Courage
• Compassion
• Connection
• Hope
• Faith

• National Suicide Prevention Hotline:
  1-800-273-TALK (8255)
• National Self-Injury Helpline:
  1-800-DONT-CUT (366-8288)
• National Eating Disorders Association Helpline:
  1-800-931-2237
• Alcohol & Drug Abuse Hotline
  1-800-729-6686
• Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN)
  1-800-656-HOPE
• 211 Connecticut – www.infoline.org
  www.helpstartshere.org
• (referrals for therapists and info)
Recommended Reading