SEPTEMBER 2024

COUNSELING PARTNERS OF LOS ANGELES

HELPING STUDENTS WITH DEPRESSION

More common than you think

The statistics are concerning: approximately one in five adolescents aged 13 to 18 will face a significant mental health disorder affecting their daily lives.

In a standard classroom of twenty-five students, this means that five students may encounter substantial obstacles that affect their learning, social interactions, or school performance.

Teachers thus play an important part in identifying and helping children with depression. In this newsletter, we will go over ways you can help your students cope with depression and other mental health disorders. We will also discuss how you can cope with depression as an educator .

Interested in teacher counseling?

CPLA offers FREE Zoom counseling for its partner schools' teachers, faculty, staff, and principals.
Reach out to teachers@counselingpartnersofla.org for a referral form. You help so many. You deserve help too.

Counseling Partners
OF LOS ANGELES

About CPLA

The mission of Counseling Partners of Los Angeles is to support at-risk and under- served students living in Los Angeles by providing a low-cost, school-based program that delivers essential counseling and support services students and teachers need in order to grow toward their full potential emotionally, intellectually, morally and socially.

WHAT DOES DEPRESSION LOOK LIKE IN CHILDREN?

Table 1. Common Signs of Depression in Children and Adolescents

Cognitive	Behavioral	Physiological
• "All or none" thinking • Catastrophizing • Memory problems • Concentration problems • Attention problems • Internal locus of control • Negative view of self, world, and future • Automatic thinking • Negative attributional style • Negative affect • Feelings of helplessness • Feelings of hopelessness • Low self-esteem • Difficulty making decisions • Feels loss of control • Suicidal thoughts	• Depressed mood • Social withdrawal • Does not participate in usual activities • Shows limited effort • Decline in self-care or personal appearance • Decreased work or school performance • Appears detached from others • Crying for no apparent reason • Inappropriate responses to events • Irritability • Apathy • Uncooperative • Suicide attempts	• Psychomotor agitation or retardation • Somatic complaints • Poor appetite or overeating • Insomnia or hypersomnia • Low energy or fatigue

From Huberty, T. J. (2008). Best practices in school-based interventions for anxiety and depression. In A. Thomas & J. Grimes (Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology V* (pp. 1473-1486). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

"Depressed children are not choosing to underperform or withdraw. They want to be successful and often are seeking guidance and support from teachers and others, but lack the ability to articulate their needs."
-Dr. John Kelly, PhD.

6 Ways to Help Students with Depression (or any mental health issue)

1. **Foster a Productive and Collaborative Bond with the Student:** Don't hesitate to engage in conversations with students experiencing depression to understand their emotions. Silence can convey a strong message, and inquiring about their well-being is unlikely to cause harm. Often, they are looking for someone who shows concern and acknowledges their struggles without them having to reach out first, even if it may not be apparent. Most importantly, continue to support them without giving up.
2. **Avoid Negative Techniques:** Discipline strategies such as punishment, sarcasm, disparagement, and passive-aggression, are not effective. They may likely reinforce feelings of low self-esteem and incompetence in students , which contributes to depression.
3. **Make Adjustments or Accommodations in Assignments or Tasks:** This doesn't mean you have to lower your expectations or compromise on standards. However, you can provide additional time, divide assignments into smaller tasks, offer support in organizing schedules or study routines, and allow flexibility in assignment deadlines. You could even pair the student with peers willing to assist as part of various classroom modifications.

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https://ibcces.org/blog/2019/03/12/teachers-fight-depression-mental-health-disorders/

4. **Encourage Social Interaction and Belonging:** Children and youth who feel connected to others have a greater sense of wellbeing. With your student and their parent(s), brainstorm ways they can get involved with group activities like a sports league, book club, dance class, art activity, etc. When youth feel like they belong at school, they are less likely to feel isolated, reducing depression.

5. **Seek out support from the school counselor.** The school counselor has the training required to do a needs assessment. They may also be better prepared to support the student in the long-term. CPLA provides counseling to students, parents, and faculty at its partner schools. If interested, please reach out!

"TEACHERS MAY BE UNCERTAIN [ON] HOW TO APPROACH AND INTERACT WITH DEPRESSED STUDENTS, BUT [THEY] SHOULD REMEMBER THAT THEY DO NOT NEED TO BE THERAPISTS OR COUNSELORS TO PROVIDE SUPPORT."
-THOMAS HUBERTY, PHD, ABPP, NCSP

FACING DEPRESSION AS AN EDUCATOR

Teaching is hard enough. Add on your own experiences of depression or another mental health issue and you may feel like it is is hard to accomplish all that you need to do. If you have been experiencing a consistently low mood marked by persistent sadness for 2 or mor weeks, you may be depressed. Take a look at the chart on page 2. Many of the symptoms that appear in child/adolescent depression occur in adults. If any of the symptoms concern you, consider reaching out to a highly trained teacher counselor through CPLA's Teacher Wellness and Counseling Services. They will be able to assess your situation, teach you coping skills, and connect you with mental health resources.

CPLA offers FREE virtual counseling to teachers, faculty, and staff!

Reach out to teachers@counselingpartnersofla.org for more information!

The journey towards recovery from depression as an educator typically involves a combination of methods. Utilizing medication, therapy, physical activity, and practicing self-care are all strategies to manage mental health challenges. It's important to know that you are not alone in experiencing depression, especially considering the current state of the world and the increasing pressures faced by individuals, especially for those caring for children.

Some Quick Tips:

- If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts, reach out to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline immediately at (800) 273-8255. The service is toll-free and available 24/7.
- Have a designated friend or colleague to contact when you need a moment to compose yourself. While this may not always be feasible due to teachers' busy schedules, remember that seeking support doesn't burden others; it shows that you trust them.
- Keep notes of gratitude from children in your desk. When feeling down, take a moment to read a few.

https://www.edutopia.org/article/teaching-depression