

Other times – like with other illnesses – depression just happens. Often teenagers react to the pain of depression by getting into trouble: trouble with alcohol, drugs, or sex; trouble with school or bad grades; problems with family or friends. This is another reason why it's important to get treatment for depression before it leads to other trouble.

Depression is a
real medical illness
and it's treatable.

Depression and Alcohol and Other Drugs

A lot of depressed people, especially teenagers, also have problems with alcohol or other drugs. (Alcohol is a drug, too.) Sometimes the depression comes first and people try drugs as a way to escape it. (In the long run, drugs or alcohol just make things worse!) Other times, the alcohol or other drug use comes first, and depression is caused by:

- the drug itself, or
- withdrawal from it, or
- the problems that substance use causes.

And sometimes you can't tell which came first...the important point is that when you have both of these problems, the sooner you get treatment, the better.

Be Able to Tell Fact From Fiction

Myths about depression often prevent people from doing the right thing. Some common myths are:

Myth: It's normal for teenagers to be moody; teens don't suffer from "real" depression. **FACT:** Depression is more than just being moody, and it can affect people at any age, including teenagers.

Myth: Telling an adult that a friend might be depressed is betraying a trust. If someone wants help, he or she will get it. **FACT:** Depression, which saps energy and self-esteem, interferes with a person's ability or wish to get help. It is an act of true friendship to share your concerns with an adult who can help.

Myth: Talking about depression only makes it worse. **FACT:** Talking through feelings with a good friend is often a helpful first step. Friendship, concern, and support can provide the encouragement to talk to a parent or other trusted adult about getting evaluated for depression.

For Additional Information About Depression Write To:

6001 Executive Boulevard, Room 8184,
MSC 9663
Bethesda, MD 20892-9663

For free brochures on depression and its treatment, call: 1-800-421-4211.

For More Information About NIMH

The Office of Communications and Public Liaison carries out educational activities and publishes and distributes research reports, press releases, fact sheets, and publications intended for researchers, health care providers, and the general public. A publications list may be obtained by contacting:

Office of Communications and Public
Liaison, NIMH
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