

Depression

Depression is a common mental health condition that can affect people of all ages, including children and adolescents. It is a feeling of sadness, hopelessness and loss of interest in things that used to bring joy. Depression can impact a child's daily life, making it difficult for them to participate in activities they once loved, concentrate in school or interact with friends and family. It's important for parents and caregivers to understand that depression is a real illness, just like a physical illness, and it is treatable. With support, care and appropriate treatment, your child can recover and go on to lead happy and fulfilling life.

Empower confidence. Start the conversation using these strategies:

- 1. Explain what depression is:**
Provide a simple, age-appropriate explanation of what depression is and what it feels like.
- 2. Normalise feelings:**
Let them know that it's normal to feel sad, worried or stressed at times, and that everyone experiences these feelings differently.
- 3. Talk about common symptoms:**
Feelings of sadness or hopelessness, loss of interest in activities, changes in sleep and appetite and low energy levels.
- 4. Emphasise that it's not their fault:**
Make sure your child knows that depression is not their fault and that they can't control how they feel.
- 5. Let them know they're not alone:**
Explain that many people experience depression and that they are not the only ones.
- 6. Encourage them to talk:**
Let them know that it's okay to talk about their feelings and that you are there to listen and support them.
- 7. Instil hope:**
Let them know that depression is treatable and that they can feel better with the right help and support.
- 8. Discuss treatment options:**
Explain the various treatments available for depression, including therapy, medication and lifestyle changes.
- 9. Discuss self-care strategies:**
Encourage your child to practice self-care such as getting enough sleep, eating health foods and engaging in physical activity.
- 10. Reassure them of your support:**
Let your child know that you love them, that you are there for them, and that you will help them through this.