



DeSoto County Schools

MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

School can be an exciting time, filled with new experiences, but at times you might feel as though it's more of a struggle. This handout is meant to help you as you work through a challenging time.

Life can be stressful. Between friend drama, packed schedules, classes, clubs, relationships, sports, jobs, parental expectations, figuring out who you are, uncertainty over things, and not enough sleep, life can occasionally get you down and feel overwhelming. And that's normal.

What's not normal is struggling through each day, feeling like things will only get worse. Maybe you feel like you've lost control, that nothing matters, or that you're alone. These feelings may indicate a condition that requires professional help, such as depression, anxiety or other mental health conditions.

Not everyone experiences mental health conditions in the same way, but everyone struggling with his/her mental health deserves help. Depression is among the most common conditions experienced. It is a complex medical illness that significantly interferes with an individual's ability to function, enjoy life, and feel like themselves.

A number of factors may contribute to a person becoming depressed; genetic predisposition and stressful life events can certainly play a role, but sometimes depression can occur without an obvious cause. This means that anyone can become depressed, even those who seemingly have every reason to be happy.

Depression commonly affects your thoughts, your emotions, your behaviors, and your overall physical health. Experiencing any one of these symptoms on its own does not constitute depression; a diagnosis of depression requires several of these symptoms to occur for at least

two weeks. Here are some of the most common symptoms that point to the presence of depression:

Feelings:

Sadness
Hopelessness
Guilt
Moodiness
Angry outbursts
Loss of interest in friends, family, and favorite activities

Thoughts:

Trouble concentrating
Difficulty making decisions
Trouble remembering
Thoughts of harming oneself
Delusions and/or hallucinations can also occur in cases of severe depression

Behaviors:

Withdrawing from people
Substance abuse
Missing work, school, or other commitments
Attempts to harm oneself (cutting)

Physical problems:

Tiredness or lack of energy
Unexplained aches and pains
Changes in appetite
Weight loss or gain
Changes in sleep – sleeping too little or too much

If you are experiencing symptoms of depression, it's important to talk to a trusted adult (parent, teacher, counselor, coach, or clergy) or doctor so that you can get the help you need. Depression does not go away on its own, but with the appropriate help it can be treated! Studies show that more than 80% of people with depression can feel better with talk therapy (counseling) and/or medication.

Maybe you've noticed that your friend hasn't been acting like his/herself lately and you're worried about whether or not he/she is really "fine" after all. If you think a friend may be depressed, show him/her you care by reaching out. Give yourself time to talk in a private,

comfortable place. Honestly share what you've noticed (changes in behavior, things they've said or done) and ask him/her how they are feeling. Let your friend know that you're asking him/her because you care, because you want him/her to feel better, and because there is help. Let your friend know that there is hope and help available, and support him/her to get the help he/she needs. If you don't feel comfortable asking your friend, share your concerns with a trusted adult who can. Talking about mental health can be difficult, but reaching out and getting help for depression is one of the most courageous, important things you can do for yourself or for a friend. It might even save a life.

Resources:

At home or outside school:

- Talk to a parent or older relative
- Call your pediatrician or physician
- Talk to someone at your church

At your school site:

- Talk to a trusted adult, teacher, or guidance counselor
- Make a referral to the school Mental Health Therapist (if available at your school) or with Region IV therapist

24/7 Confidential Hotlines:

- Memphis Crisis Center: 888-359-8255
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255
- Trevor Lifeline for LGBTQ Youth: 866-488-7386
- Crisis Text Line text HOME to 741741
- If someone is in immediate danger, call 911

Getting help does not mean that you have failed, it means you've allowed others to show they care.

Information obtained from Toolkit for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention-
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