



Suggestions for Teens with Depression and Anxiety

Note: Content on this handout is for information only. It is not intended to provide medical or other professional advice.

Teens often experience depression and anxiety...it is quite common. It is a great idea to find a holistic practitioner you can trust to help you out. Here are a few areas you can start working in to help your teen naturally. *Be careful, however, if your teen has expressed anything that sounds like wanting to end his/her life. Go immediately to a hospital or clinic for professional help. Err on the side of caution!*

Some symptoms of depression are loss of interest in normal activities, feeling sad, empty, changes in appetite, feeling guilty or worthless, restlessness, trouble sleeping (too much or too little), irritability, extreme anger, trouble focusing, pain that you can't explain, etc.

There are several areas that you can help your teen make healthy lifestyle changes:

Diet

The typical American teenage diet can be heavily contributing to your teen's moodiness. As difficult as this sounds, try to help your teen by adding in healthier food choices, such as fresh produce in the form of salads (i.e., raw), lightly steamed veggies, and foods that have not been overly processed. Try to help your teen dial back on the sodas (yes, even diet soda), things with sugar, refined wheat (think bread, pizza, pasta, etc.), and high-carb, processed snack foods like most conventional potato chips. By the way, you can make very healthy, great tasting versions of all these foods!

Supplements

*****Please note that although there are not many problems arising from teens taking prescription and other drugs and supplements, always check first with a reliable source to make sure there are no contraindications. Consider working with a competent health care practitioner.**

*St. John's Wort – herb for depression, other mental health disorders, is anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, and antiviral.

*SAmE – may be useful in depression, arthritis, heart disease, ADHD, seizures, etc. This is produced naturally in the body but is also made in supplemental form.

*5HTP – a chemical made by the body from L-tryptophan, a protein building block. Tryptophan produces 5HTP and is found in turkey, chicken, milk, greens, etc. It can help raise serotonin levels, which may help ease depression. Used also to treat sleep disorders, ADHD, Parkinson's, etc.

*Omega-3 fatty acids – helps the heart but also may help in depression symptoms; needed for neurological growth. Found in fish, some nut oils, some plants, and can be purchased as supplements.

*Vitamin B – important to one's brain health, with B12 and B6 especially helpful. Can be found in meat, fish, eggs, dairy; B12 injections for severe cases. Available in supplemental form.

*Vitamin D – “sunshine vitamin;” helps the body absorb calcium, so good for bone strength; may also be protective in cancer, blood pressure, and symptoms of depression.

*Saffron – spice; used to strengthen digestive processes, may help with menstruation, improve mood, and relaxation.

*Kava kava – medicinal plant; use teas and tinctures since it can make people feel intoxicated; known to reduce anxiety and induce relaxation.

While these suggestions have been known to help many, they will not necessarily help your teen – each person has an individual physiological and hence mental response. If your teen experiences an adverse reaction, please cease. Try another supplement. Please also consider working with a competent holistic health care professional.

Mindfulness

Anything that can help your teen to feel more relaxed and centered will help your teen cope with the crushing sense that depression and anxiety can bring. Look for ways to help your teen relax – it can happen with music, tapping (emotional freedom techniques), yoga, meditation, Bible study, binaural beats (sound waves), diffusing essential oils, reading, etc. This will help your teen slow down, focus on the present moment, and may be open to sharing more with you, the parent and/or caretaker.

Counseling

It may be easier for your teen to talk with a stranger he/she feels can be trusted than to talk to you, the parent! So, at times counseling may be a good complement to other lifestyle changes discussed above. Be discriminating at what source is being used; just talking to a person who happens to be in your insurance policy may not be helpful if your teen does not relate well to that person. Consider other types of counseling professionals, such as health and wellness coaches. At times free counseling is available at schools.

Is your child being bullied at school? Is your child having trouble with peers, teachers, love interests, etc.? Has your child ever tried to run away? Do you suspect your teen is using alcohol and/or other drugs? Who is your teen hanging out with? Is your teen suffering from low self-esteem? Is your teen engaging in other reckless behaviors? Try to find out what is actually happening that may be happening. Then plan your strategy accordingly.

As always, please have a happy, holistically healthy day!