

Excerpted from chapter 1 of **Recovering from Depression: A Workbook for Teens, Revised Edition**, by Mary Ellen Copeland, M.A., M.S., & Stuart Copans, M.D.

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Am I Depressed?

Overview

Have you been feeling really awful and don't know why? If so, you may be depressed. Many people are depressed, don't know they are depressed, and don't know why they feel so bad. You deserve to feel well. Your health and happiness are important. If you are depressed, you can help yourself to feel better, and you can get help from others. This book will give you information to help you do that.

Information

The Depression Survey on pages 4–6 will help you discover if you are depressed. But before you take this survey, answer the following questions.

Have you been:

- Feeling like killing yourself?

- Making plans as to how you will kill yourself?

- Wishing you were dead?

- Wishing you would get killed accidentally?

- Feeling like killing yourself is the only way to solve your problems?

DO NOT ACT ON THESE FEELINGS. GET HELP RIGHT NOW.

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you need help right away. Turn immediately to Chapter 3, Suicide Prevention.

Things to Remember

- If you are feeling bad, even if you are not sure whether or not it is depression, don't use alcohol or street drugs to make yourself feel better. They will make you feel better at first, but you will feel much worse later. Street drugs and alcohol can keep you from seeking the help you need to really feel better, and they often lead to an addiction, which can be a very big problem.
- You may think you will never feel better, but you will. Depression ends. By helping yourself and getting help from others, you will begin feeling much better very soon.
- It is not your fault you feel this way. Don't blame yourself. That will just make you feel worse.

Every morning my mother tries to get me up to go to school. I feel so awful. I don't want to get up. I just want to keep my head under the covers and sleep all day. If I go to school, I know I will fail. I'm sure I will flunk that math test. I can't understand anything the teachers are saying anyway. None of my friends like me anymore. I used to like the Drama Club, but now I can't stand it. Everyone is laughing and having a good time, and I'm not part of it. I don't think anyone even cares about me.

The following checklist will help you discover for yourself if you are depressed. Check off any symptoms that apply to you.

Depression Survey

DO YOU FEEL:

- Hopeless, worthless, useless, like not caring about anything, like you might as well be dead, like you are a failure?

- That there is no solution to your problems?
- Numb, without feelings?
- Like you have nothing to look forward to?
- Like you never have any fun?
- Ugly, like everyone is staring at you?
- Like nobody would miss you if you were gone?
- Like sleeping all the time or sleeping much more than 8 hours a day; or you have trouble sleeping and seem to be awake all night?
- Like you don't want to eat anything or like eating all the time?
- Very tired almost all the time?
- Irritable, angry, and/or anxious most of the time?

- Like you don't want to do anything?
- Very lonely, even when you are with your friends or family?
- Like you are a bad person?
- Like there is no one you can trust or talk to, that no one likes or cares about you?

HAVE YOU:

- Lost more than 10 pounds recently without being on a diet (you just don't feel like eating)?
- Secretly cut, burned, or hurt yourself?
- Heard your friends telling you they are worried about you, that you are quieter than usual, or that you are always in a bad mood?

DO YOU:

- Have a hard time getting up in the morning or find you are unable to get up for school or work?
- Worry a lot?
- Have a very negative attitude?

- Cry easily?

ARE YOU:

- Very quiet?

- Always thinking about mistakes you have made in the past?

DO YOU TRY TO HIDE THE WAY YOU FEEL BY:

- Smiling when you don't feel like it?

- Taking risks such as driving too fast?

- Having sex?

- Using drugs and alcohol?

- Getting in fights?

- Secretly hurting yourself?

- Not showing your feelings?

Things to Do

You need to get help for depression right away if you:

- Checked off or answered yes to several of the symptoms of depression

- Have felt bad for more than 2 weeks
- Feel so bad you can't keep up with your schoolwork and other responsibilities
- Are thinking about hurting or killing yourself or anyone else
- Think a lot about dying

Things to Remember

The next chapter will tell you how to get help. Don't delay. Get help now. You deserve to feel better. The sooner you get help, the sooner you will feel better.

After you have gotten help, there are things you can do to help yourself feel better and to keep you from getting depressed again. But first, get help.

Do not turn to alcohol or street drugs to make you feel better. They will make you feel better for a very short time, but after the effects wear off, you will feel **MUCH WORSE**.

Next Steps

If you think a friend is depressed, turn to Appendix A, If a Friend Is Depressed, to find out what to do.

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