

## 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 tough 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 their 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 (e.g., cutting)

*(Symptoms of depression, continued)*

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 themselves lately and you're worried about whether or not they're really "fine" after all. If you think a friend may be depressed, show them 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 them how they are feeling. Let them know that you're asking them because you care, because you want them to feel better, and because there is help. Let them know that there is hope and help available, and support them to get the help they need. 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
- See a counselor at Adolescent Counseling Services (ACS)

## 24/7 Confidential Helplines:

- **Santa Clara County Suicide and Crisis Hotline: 855-278-4204**
- **San Mateo Crisis Line: 650-579-0350**
- **San Francisco Crisis Line: 415-781-0500**
- **California Youth Crisis Line: 800-843-5200**
- **Trevor Lifeline for LGBTQ Youth: 866-488-7386**
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255**
- **Crisis Text Line 741-741 (<http://www.crisistextline.org>)**

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.**