



Families' and Children's Adjustment Study

Study Update by Martha C. Thompson, Ph.D.

What do we know about Depression in Teens?

Adolescence is a time of many changes, physical, intellectual and emotional. It is also a time when teenagers are more likely to experience depression. Depression appears to be relatively rare before adolescence, with only about 3% of school-aged children suffering from it. Interestingly, rates of depression increase dramatically during adolescence with 20% of youth expected to experience depression by age 20! We know that many adults with depression report that they first had it during adolescence. Long-term studies of youth suggest that this increase in depression begins approximately at age 13 and generally after the physical changes of puberty have become obvious. Although both girls and boys show increased rates of depression, there is a much sharper increase in rates for girls. By adulthood women are twice as likely as men to experience depression.

Why do we see increases in depression in the teenage years?

1.) Brain Development – Teenagers brains are rapidly changing as they grow. The frontal lobes – the part of the brain that allows us to plan ahead, consider many options for problems, make sound decisions, and understand consequences – is still developing. So although teens may be quite smart, they can also be overwhelmed by information and decisions. They may make choices that get them into trouble.

2.) Demands – Despite their limitations, teenagers have many things to do during these important years, including figuring out who they are, adjusting to a new body (not easy!), preparing to be an adult, learning how to have romantic relationships. This is a really overwhelming time! Coping may be overtaxed . . .

3.) Teenage world – Teenagers shift their focus from the family to peers, roman-

tic partners, and the larger social world. They're getting ready to "launch" from the family. Sometimes they don't have enough support from those around them to deal with all this stress.

How can we help teenagers?

Continue to be a strong family! Despite the fact that teens are moving away, most teens report that their parents are still an important source of support for them. It's appropriate to have rules and expectations and to work on compromise where appropriate.

Provide a listening ear! Teenagers may not tell parents everything, but they often need them to be there to help them. Sometimes by just listening carefully and understanding what teenagers are going through, parents can help them better understand their own problems and find solutions.

Know what they are up to. Even though teens need independence and increasing responsibilities, they also need monitoring. Teens whose parents know what they are doing and where they are spending their time are less likely to get into the kinds of troubles with peers and school that can contribute to depression.

Keep our eyes open! Being aware of when teens are depressed and need professional help is important. If a teen seems very overwhelmed, is frequently upset, or shows major changes in friends, family and schoolwork, these are signs that a teen may need professional help. Threats toward oneself or others should always be taken seriously and help sought.

Adolescence is a time of excitement and personal growth! Depression can really get in the way during this important time in development. By being attentive to the needs of adolescents we can keep them heading toward a promising future. We hope you all are well and enjoying the spring!

If there have been any changes in your own contact information, please let us know as soon as possible - Thank you!

Lab Contact Information

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Lights, Camera, Action!

As small as watching a movie together with the kids can be exciting and interactive. Use this time to discuss about some topics and morals that are covered in the movie. Here are some conversation starters to get the talk rolling.

1) Toy Story 3: Nominated for five Oscars, Toy Story 3 stole not only the hearts of children, but even the adult viewers' as well. The movie discusses about separation, loyalty and friendship and serves as good models of them. All of the dynamics behind sibling rivalry are here as well, so if your kids are going through something similar, this is a perfect movie to watch. Families can start the conversation by asking what makes you a good friend/sibling?

Animation, Adventure, Comedy: Rated G



2) How to Train Your Dragon: This excellent adventure comedy has a lot of action along with two Oscars nominations. The characters of the movie are the "misfits" of the society. With a strong female character and an honorable, brainy protagonist, kids will learn the value of cooperation, teamwork and seeing beyond the society's pressure to conform.

Animation, Adventure, Comedy: Rated PG,

3) Up: Oscar's 2009 Best Animated Film is not only cinematographically exquisite but also will make your heart melt. The cross-generational friendship between Carl and Russell shows something unique and could spark interest in their grandparents' life stories. Families can talk about children's relationships with the elders. *Animation, Adventure: Rated PG*



4) What would our lives look like if we were to continue the abuse to our environment? Wall-E gives us a glimpse of a waste-covered Earth after years of irresponsible measures taken. There is a strong environmental message underlying in this movie: Reduce, reuse, recycle and think about what you're doing to the planet. Families can talk about how technology can be an escape from reality and extreme laziness. What can we do to prevent these things? What happens if you rely your life on technology and instant gratification? This allows kids to see that their cell-phones, computers, and TVs are only the means of happiness and not a source of happiness.

Animation, Adventure, Comedy: Rated G



Tips to Lessen Stress And Conflicts

Things can get pretty rough and stressful around the house when things get busy—making food, cleaning the mess and on top of all that, trying to get things done. A healthy family doesn't mean a family without conflicts. Trouble is inevitable but with a tad of creativity and love, you can lessen the burdens and stress that can weigh you down.

1. Avoid NEVER, EVER, ALWAYS.

These extreme comments have a strong underlying connotation - "you're a disappointment" or "you're hopeless". These kinds of comments can really hurt. It's important to be specific. Sometimes when we're angry, we say things that are more extreme and harm those around us. Next time, try to be specific and start off by saying "it hurt me when you..." or "it makes me feel ... when you ...".

2. Practice being thankful.

Verbalizing positive comments can only benefit you. Even better, by modeling this attitude of recognition, your whole family will be able to appreciate the thankful moments that

we sometimes overlook. Children and adults who look for the good in situations will have happier memories and set the stage for more positive relationships.

3. Hold family meetings

Family meetings allow everybody in the family to share their feelings and make sure everybody is on the same page. Brainstorm together for solutions. Remember that a family is like a boat—one movement will make the whole boat to rock. So you're out or in it all together. Make sure that everybody is heard and acknowledged. This is not only a place of listening but also a place of sharing.



4. Actively listen.

Sometimes it's really hard to listen. But next time you catch yourself struggling to listen, hold what you have to say and let them finish. Look them in the eyes and reflect back on what you hear. Following up with open-ended questions like "what made you feel this way?" or "what do you want to do about it?" are good ways to respond actively. You are not to find solutions for them but to listen and help them find it for themselves.

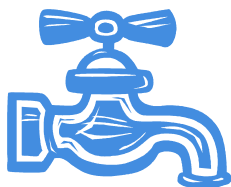
5. Be generous with encouragements.

It's so easy to criticize than to praise. However, there should always be more positive comments than the negatives. This way, it balances out the criticisms with the accolades and demonstrate that we notice and appreciate the other person. There's a great sense of accomplishment when you acknowledge someone publicly about something even so minute. This can have surprising results.

<http://www.vibrantlife.org/>
www.huffingtonpost.com/

Easy Habits That Can Help Our Environment By Tons!

1. Pay attention to how you use your water. Every time you leave the water running while you brush your teeth or let the water run while you're washing dishes, you might be wasting gallons of water a day. Try drinking tap water (with filter) instead of bottled water so you're not



wasting all that packaging as well. Even more? Wash your clothes with cold or warm water instead of hot.

2. Start using your feet to get to places. Leave your car at home. If you can stay off the road just two days a week, you'll reduce greenhouse gas emission by an average of 1,590 pounds per year and your jeans will probably fit better in a couple of weeks.

3. Change your light bulbs. Compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) last 10 times longer than a standard bulb and use two-thirds less energy. Look for ENERGY STAR products, which have met EPA and US Department of Energy guidelines for efficiency. In 2006, the ENERGY STAR program saved energy equivalent to taking 25 million cars off the road and saved Americans \$14 billion on utility costs. Imagine what you could do with that money!

4. Drive smarter. Slowing down to 60 miles per hour instead of 70 mph on the highway will save you up to 4 miles per gallon. Also, underinflated tires decrease fuel economy by up to 3% and lead to increased pollution and higher greenhouse gas emissions. A double plus for you and the environment.

5. Recycle! Just putting your empty soda can in the right recycling bin will reduce pollution significantly. If an office building of 7,000 workers recycled all of its office paper waste for a year, it would be equivalent of taking almost 400 cars off the road. Avoid products with several layers of packaging. About 33% of what we throw away is packaging. Compost your food solid waste. Reducing solid waste you produce in a year means taking up less space in landfills, so your tax dollars can work somewhere else.



www.seql.org/100ways.cfm

<http://science.howstuffworks.com/environmental/green-science/m>

Cook's Corner: Home-made Goodies

Home-made Pop-Tarts!

Why buy an artificial treat when you can make a delicious one at home!

Yield: 24 pieces

Time: 1 hour

Tools: rolling pin, cookie sheet, food processor/mixer, wax paper, ruler

Ingredients:

Dough: 2 cup flour, 1 tsp salt, 1 cup butter, 3/4 cup corn syrup

Icing: 1/4 cup powdered sugar, 2 egg whites, 1/2 tsp salt, 2 tsp vanilla, sprinkles (optional)

Directions: **Combine** the flour and salt in a large bowl and cut the butter in consistent pea-sized lumps.

Add the corn syrup and mix until it comes together. Flatten the dough in squares and wrap in a plastic wrap, and chill it for 30 minutes.

Lay wax paper and dust with powdered sugar and roll the chilled dough to 1/4" thick. Use a ruler to cut it into 3 1/8" wide strips then cut each strip every 4 inches.

Put a thin layer of filling (with jelly or fruit filling) on 12 of the rectangles, leaving 1/2" border on each border.

Brush the border with water and place another layer of pastry over the filling. Seal the edges.

Preheat the oven to 350F and **bake** the Pop-Tarts for about 20 minutes until lightly brown

Cool completely before frosting

Frosting: **mix** everything except for the sprinkles and **beat** until stiff and glossy. **Leave** 1/4" border and allow it to cool for an hour.

<http://whisk-kid.blogspot.com/> (above)

[http://momofukufor2.com/\(below\)](http://momofukufor2.com/(below))

Something new?

Mashed Potato Spring Roll!

Got left-over mashed potatoes from last night? Make a delicious appetizer for the dinner table today!

Yield: 2 pieces

Time: 25 minutes

Tools: rolling pin, skillet

Ingredients:

4 slices of white bread, 1/4 cup of mashed potato, 2 green beans cooked and sliced in two, salt/pepper to taste, 1 egg yolk, oil for frying

Directions:

Trim the crust of the bread and roll out each bread slice rolling pin.

Season mashed potato with salt and pepper.

Brush edges of 4 bread rectangles with egg yolk. **Place** 1 Tsp of mashed potato into a log along the bread, leaving 1/2 inch on each end. Top with half a green bean. **Roll** up the bread into a cylinder and press ends together to seal.

In a skillet, **heat** the oil to 325F and add rolls and fry, turning occasionally, until well-browned about 1 1/2 minutes.

Therapy Study for Children with Depression

At Boston University

Do you know a child who...

- Appears sad or down?
- Has lost pleasure in fun activities?
- Feels hopeless?
- Is more irritable than usual?
- Complains of aches and pains?
- Has withdrawn from friends or family?

The **S.O.S.** Study

Systems of Support

- Free sessions with a therapist for children ages 7-15 with depression
- Payments for participation
- Located in Kenmore Square

If you know a child who may be eligible to participate, please do not hesitate to call or email us:

617-358-4584

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