

From Parent's Guide to Teen Depression at HelpGuide.Org

Communicating with a depressed or anxious teen

- **Focus on listening, not lecturing.** Resist any urge to criticize or pass judgment once your teenager begins to talk. The important thing is that your child is communicating. You'll do the most good by simply letting your teen know that you're there for them, fully and unconditionally.
- **Be gentle but persistent.** Don't give up if they shut you out at first. Talking about depression can be very tough for teens. Even if they want to, they may have a hard time expressing what they're feeling. Be respectful of your child's comfort level while still emphasizing your concern and willingness to listen.
- **Acknowledge their feelings.** Don't try to talk your teen out of depression, even if their feelings or concerns appear silly or irrational to you. Well-meaning attempts to explain why "things aren't that bad" will just come across as if you don't take their emotions seriously. To make them feel understood and supported, simply acknowledging the pain and sadness they are experiencing can go a long way in making them feel understood and supported.
- **Trust your gut.** If your teen claims nothing is wrong but has no explanation for what is causing the depressed behavior, you should trust your instincts. If your teen won't open up to you, consider turning to a trusted third party: a school counselor, favorite teacher, or mental health professional. The important thing is to get them talking to someone.

Get help for a suicidal teen

If you suspect that a teenager you know is suicidal, take immediate action! For 24-hour suicide prevention and support in the U.S., call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **1-800-273-TALK**.