

Parenting is difficult. Children don't come with manuals and we often have to figure things out as we go, through trial and error. It is not uncommon for parents who have children with anxiety or depression to feel overwhelmed or not know where to go for help. Please read below for some tips for parents who have pre- teens and teens who struggle with depression and anxiety:

- Look for behavioral changes or patterns such as not sleeping well, shutting down in conversations, a drop in grades, sudden irritability, being quieter than usual, isolation from friends and family, loss of interest in hobbies or activities.
- Talk to their friends, teachers, coaches or others who may notice a change in your child. Getting another person's opinion, who does not live in the house, can be beneficial and insightful.
- Consider getting professional help with therapy or seeing a psychiatrist. Sometimes it is easier to start with your child's primary care doctor for their opinion or for a referral. Depression is a chemical imbalance in the brain and often times, medication is needed. Therapy can help greatly when dealing with anxiety and or depression as coping skills can be learned and practiced.
- Think about family history. Are there family members on either side of the family who struggle with depression, anxiety or other mental illnesses? If there is and you have noticed a significant shift in behavior, there could be a chance your child is also struggling with symptoms.
- If there has been a family member who has completed suicide, this makes your child more at risk. Don't be afraid to ask them if they are having thoughts of suicide or self- harming thoughts. Early intervention is key to help managing these thoughts and urges.
- Remember, teens are impulsive and act on their emotions. They don't necessarily understand what is happening to them or why they feel the way they do. Due to their impulsivity, they are at higher risk for following through with self- harming thoughts, suicidal thoughts, or abusing substances to cope with their thoughts and emotions.