



Lesson Three: Depression and Anxiety

Background

Most teens will agree that their lives are filled with moments of stress, living up to expectations, pressure and competition. These expectations, personal and parental, can prove to be somewhat overwhelming at times. This lesson focuses on helping students understand the importance of and strategies for recognizing and managing depression and anxiety.

Discussion Questions

1. Who can share a few of the words or feelings associated with depression? What are some of the actions often associated with depression?
2. Who can give us a definition of depression in your own words? What causes depression?
3. Clinical depression is a term that is used when a person feels depressed for long periods of time. Clinical depression is very serious. Who can tell us why?
4. Being sad or disappointed when things seem to go wrong is a natural feeling to have. These feelings generally do not last for long periods of time. Not being selected for an athletic team or for a leading role in a school play would be very disappointing to most individuals. How do teens generally deal with these types of situations?
5. Why is it sometimes hard to tell if a person is clinically depressed? Keeping an image of being a fun loving, outgoing, and confident person may be masking a person's real feelings of depression. Who remembers what some of the "feelings of depression" are from our vocabulary terms?
6. Anger, resentment and feelings of hopelessness or helplessness are warning signs. Recognizing these feelings is an important first step to take. Who can name some of the staff at our school that has been trained to help students in crisis situations? Would you feel comfortable in asking one of these people for help if you needed it? Why or why not?
7. What are some of the common situations teens experience that cause higher than normal levels of anxiety or stress? Why?



Vocabulary Builders

Term	Definition
Crisis	A term used to describe an unstable situation of extreme danger or difficulty.
Positive Outlets	A term used to describe positive ways to reduce the stress caused by a crisis. Examples include talking to a friend, taking a break from the stress (e.g., vacation), riding your bike, or doing something with a friend.
Negative Outlets	A term used to describe negative ways to reduce the stress caused by a crisis. Examples include using alcohol, ignoring your feelings or secluding yourself from friends.
Feelings of Depression	The general feeling of depression may include sadness, unhappiness, worthlessness, bitterness, hopelessness, helplessness, restlessness, or irritation and anger.



Activity

Depression Reflections

1. Sometimes it's helpful to use an analogy to get a point across. To open up a discussion on depression and anxiety, use the analogy of a "cold" to get across the prevalence of teen depression. Like the "common cold," teen depression is taken somewhat for granted. "You'll get over it, everyone does" is a common thought in regards to dealing with the usual forms of depression. However, colds can be very dangerous. They weaken your immune system and allow other infections to invade the body. Begin this lesson by saying to your students:
 - Depression is often called the "Common Cold" of mental and emotional health. Why do you think it's called that? (Answer: Just like the cold, there are literally hundreds of different reasons why depression happens. And just like colds, it can last for several days, a week or even longer. Unfortunately, like a cold that may turn into sometime more serious, depression can lead to suicide.)
 - Just like colds, there are varying degrees of depression. It can be mild, where you may feel "down" or a bit "blue," or it can be severe like clinical depression.
 - Who can tell me the signs of clinical depression that were explained in today's video? (Answer: Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, anger, or hurt that last for weeks or months and do not go away. Being tired or drained or crying.)
 - Who or what can help? (Answer: Clinical depression can be helped through medication called anti-depressants that are prescribed by doctors. Counseling and engaging in positive outlets that relieve depression such as exercise also help.)
 - Is it normal to get sad from time to time? (Answer: Yes)
 - According to the video, what percentage of teens has episodes of clinical depression? (Answer: 1 in 8, or about 12%).
 - Clinical depression is serious. If you or someone you know is exhibiting signs of clinical depression, what should that person do? (Answer: Seek immediate medical attention.)
2. Distribute copies of the Reflection Worksheet. Ask the students to reflect on a time in their lives when they felt depressed, anxious or under a great deal of stress. Ask them to write about this time on the worksheet. Tell the students that it is not the purpose of this activity to get them to reveal anything too personal or uncomfortable. Give the class about 5-10 minutes for this reflection piece.



Reflection Worksheet

Directions: Think of a time in your life when you felt depressed, sad or blue. Take 5-10 minutes to answer the following reflection questions.

- 1) Generally, what was the situation?
- 2) Who was involved?
- 3) Where did it happen?
- 4) When did it happen?
- 5) Make a list of words that describe how you felt when you were sad.
- 6) Did you act differently during this time? Describe this:
- 7) Did you think differently during this time? Describe this:

3. When the students are done, ask the class the following:

- Who feels comfortable in sharing a few of the words that describe how you felt when you were sad? (List these words on the whiteboard or chart paper under a column headed "Feel.")
- Did any of you act differently? What were some of the ways? (List these words under a column headed "Act.")
- Did any of you think differently? What were some of the ways? (List these words under a column headed "Think.")

4. Throughout this discussion of the above three questions, ask "How many of you have felt this way too?" or "How many of you have acted this way too?" Or "How many of you have thought this too?" to involve more students in this activity.

- What conclusions can we draw from our discussion? Do we all experience times when we are depressed? (Answer: Yes) When we are depressed we don't act in ways we usually do and we don't think the way we usually do.
- Who can give an example?



- How many of you are less optimistic when you are depressed? Are you less optimistic now? Why or why not?
- Unless the event you were using was a recent one, the ways you were acting or thinking are probably gone. What did you do that helped you? How many of you talked with a person you trusted? How many of you remembered a word of advice that helped you feel better?



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