

# DEPRESSION

Depression is a serious medical illness that if left untreated can cause you to have thoughts of wanting to kill yourself. Not everyone with depression is suicidal, but most people who die by suicide are depressed, which is why early detection is so important.

Depression is characterized by feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness, and the inability to function, which can affect your studies and grades. It clouds your mind, zaps your energy and makes you feel discouraged. It causes significant changes in mood, thoughts, behaviors, bodily functions and even suicidal thoughts. More than 90% of people diagnosed with depression get better with a combination of medication and talk therapy.

There is no cause of depression. Doctors think that it results from a combination of things such as family and relationship history, the place where you live and work, where and how you grew up and your emotional health.

## Some warning signs of Depression include:

- Changes in mood, such as becoming irritable, angry or withdrawn
- Changes in behavior, such as being unable to focus in class or not wanting to be with friends
- Drug and alcohol use or abuse
- Loss in interest in once enjoyable activities
- Difficulty sleeping or sleeping more than usual
- Changes in eating habits
- Criminal behavior, like shop lifting
- Fixation with death, suicidal thoughts
- Spending time with others who are suicidal or depressed

## Some risk factors for depression include:

- Personal or family history of mental illness, including depression, suicide or bipolar disorder
- Having a medical illness and or chronic pain
- A recent loss or severe stress
- Unexplained physical problems

- History of using drugs or alcohol to feel better
- Being away from home for the first time
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Sexual orientation (LGBTQ population)

In order to diagnose depression your healthcare provider might perform a physical exam, ask questions and perform lab tests. Also, talking to a professional clinician about your symptoms and length of time you have been experiencing these symptoms may also help to diagnosis depression. The majority of people diagnosed with depression does get better with medication and talk therapy within a year. The sooner you get help the better your treatment choices are. Its ok to talk to someone about depression. By talking about your depression it does not mean that you are weak or a bed person. People are out there and want to help.

### *The ways we can fight depression include:*

- Get involved in activities that you usually enjoy (being outdoors, movies, concerts, community events, theater, sporting events etc.)
- Do not use drugs or alcohol
- Learn about healthy nutrition and take steps to eat a balanced diet
- Get enough sleep
- Engage in 20 minutes of movement or exercise
- Try not to be alone
- Focus on what is doable
- Avoid getting overwhelmed
- Break up large tasks to smaller ones
- Celebrate the small steps
- Replace negative thoughts with positive thoughts
- Good coping skills
- Good problem-solving skills
- Engagement with peers, school, athletics, employment, religion or culture
- Strong support system
- Access medical and mental health care
- Family provides structure, limits, and rules
- Supportive and encouraging family relationships
- No family history of mental illness
- High self-esteem