

# Childhood Depression

Depression occurs when sad feelings do not go away, and when they overwhelm a person and stop them from doing the things they normally do.

Children and young people may show it in a different way to adults.

The defining characteristic of depression, and what sets it apart from anxiety (and grief) is **lowered self-esteem**.

## Signs of depression may include:

- Finding it hard to concentrate, losing interest in schoolwork and play.
- Refusing to go to school.
- Constantly complaining of feeling bored or lonely, even when they have friends.
- Irritability and moodiness beyond the normal range.
- Tearfulness.
- Defiance or violent outbursts.
- Lack of confidence; low self esteem; blaming themselves if things go wrong.
- Disruptive behaviour at school, bullying, stealing or doing other things that lead to them being punished.
- Becoming very withdrawn.
- Self-injury.
- Sleeping very little or too much.
- Younger children may appear to take backwards steps in their development, e.g. toilet training or eating.

# What can you, as a parent, do to help your child with anxiety or depression?

- **Be positive** – smile when you see the child, show that you are pleased to see them, make every day a fresh start.
- **Listen** – take time to find out how the day is going, what happened at the weekend, why playtime went wrong etc. If “now” is not the time, tell them when will be!
- **Talk to them** – share your thoughts and experiences, be honest and open when possible, share *your* fears and anxieties, talk as a whole class about emotions.
- **Notice but don't question** – ‘I noticed that you seemed a bit stressed this morning. Is there any way I can help?’

## THINGS YOU CAN DO:

Calm colours such as yellow  
(dyslexia friendly)

Doodle wall/board/books

Checking in – thumbs  
up/thumbs down/face  
pebbles

Well-being ambassador – mind  
medicine prescriptions

Bouts of exercise – BBC super  
movers/Daily Mile/go for a  
walk

Random acts of kindness

Well-being space – reflection  
area

Sand timers for silence

Well-being area –space in the  
garden

Well-being bags

Counselling

Reading

Music for relaxation

Help cards and Colour feel wheels

Make something – crafts

Laughing monkey

Recipes for well-being – first aid kit

Useful resources and website

Ask school for advice

Five a day mental health

Make an appointment with yourself

Build your own mental health  
toolbox for your family and  
yourselves