Understanding Adolescent Depression & Bipolar Disorders

re:MIND

DEPRESSION & BIPOLAR SUPPORT

"I wouldn't be where I am without the support of this group."

-Participant

Understanding Adolescent Depression & Bipolar Disorder

While depression and bipolar disorder impact individuals of all ages, symptoms may look different between adolescents and adults. Adolescent depression and bipolar disorder are real physical illnesses that affect moods, thoughts, body, energy and emotions. For many adolescents, symptoms ease with treatment such as medication, counseling or support groups.

About 20% of youth ages 13-18 struggle with mental health issues. Many lifetime cases of mental illness begin in adolescent years through young adulthood. If you feel your adolescent might be struggling with depression or bipolar disorder, talk to their physician about possible treatment options.

Depression

Approximately 11% of adolescents ages 12-17 had at least one major depressive episode the year prior to being surveyed in the United States last year (SAMSA 2014). Children are at higher risks for depression when they are under stress, experience loss or have other mental illness diagnosis (NARSAD 2013). Depressive symptoms are different from "the blues." Talk to your child's physician if he/she is experiencing any of the following symptoms:

- Appears or speaks of being very sad.
- Frequent reports of being in pain such as stomachaches and headaches.
- Eating too much or too little.
- Sleeping too much or too little.
- Repetitive movements, ex: chewing nails, peeling cuticles or pacing.
- Has low energy and no interest in activities that he/she previously enjoyed doing.
- Feelings of worthlessness, excessive or inappropriate guilt.
- Diminished ability to think/concentrate.
- Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide; suicide attempt or suicide plans.

Do not try to diagnose your child on your own; consult with a physician or mental health professional.

Bipolar Disorder

Bipolar disorder often appears in the late teen or early adult years, although some individuals experience their first symptoms during childhood. The disorder is marked by extreme changes in mood and energy. These extreme changes or "mood episodes" cause disruptions to everyday functioning and are more severe than an adolescent's typical ups and downs. Bipolar disorder includes manic phases (mania) as well as depression. Speak to your physician if your child is experiencing the following manic symptoms:

- Decreased need for sleep.
- Feels very happy.
- Risky behavior such as excessive spending, careless decisions, sexual promiscuity or erratic driving.
- Irritable mood or acts unusually silly for them and for other children their age.
- Trouble staying focused.
- Talks very fast about many different topics.
- Delusions or hallucinations.
- Drastic changes in mood, usually from happy/silly to angry/aggressive.

If you are currently feeling suicidal:

- Call 911
- Go to a hospital
- Call Harris Center Hotline - 713.970.7000

Helpful Skills

Remember, everyone's symptoms are different, but if many symptoms persist for over 3-4 weeks, talk to your doctor/ therapist. Here are some helpful tips:

- Increase awareness; learn triggers for the illness and coping skills for your child. Remember to be patient.
- Establish a consistent routine and sleep pattern for your child.
- Balanced diet and exercise can help your child better manage the illness.
- Ask a loved one for help/support in caring for your child and attending medical appointments.
- Talk with your child about mood changes. It's helpful to use a mood tracker to take to doctors' appointments.
- Talk therapy can be helpful for children to work through feelings and to learn coping skills.
- Medications can help stabilize moods.

How re:MIND Support Groups Can Help

Groups are free and confidential.

Better understand yourself or a loved one.

Discover yourself while feeling accepted.

Groups are specialized for specific populations.

Interested families with adolescents (13-17 yr) may apply for the group by calling 713.600.1131.

Emergency Numbers

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1.800.273.TALK (8255)

Teen Crisis Hotline
713.529.TEEN (8336)
713.526.8008 Spanish Hotline

Harris Center Hotline
713.970.7000

Crisis Outreach Team
713.970.7520

Houston Police Department
713.884.3131

Mental Health Information Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration:
www.samhsa.gov

National Institute on Mental Health
www.nimh.nih.gov

Quick Reference Medication Chart
www.psyd-fx.com

International Bipolar Foundation
www.internationalbipolarfoundation.org

www.remindsupport.org
713.600.1131