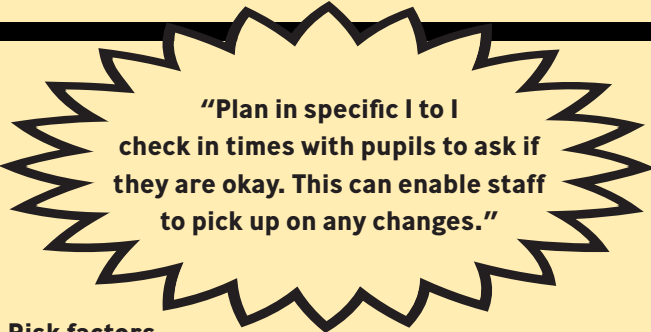


Depression

Depression is common yet serious, and can be recurrent. In England it affects at least 5% of teenagers, although some estimates are higher, and are higher in girls than in boys. A clinical depression is defined as one that lasts for at least 2 weeks, affects behaviour, and has physical, emotional and cognitive effects (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). It interferes with the ability to study, work and have satisfying relationships. Depression in children and young people often occurs alongside other mental health difficulties, and recognition and diagnosis of the difficulty may be more complicated in children and young people, because the way symptoms are expressed varies with the developmental age of the individual. In addition to this, stigma associated with mental health may obscure diagnosis.



Risk factors

- Experiencing other mental or emotional problems
- Divorce of parents
- Perceived poor achievement at school
- Bullying
- Developing a long term physical illness
- Death of someone close
- Break up of a relationship
- Some people will develop depression in a distressing situation, whereas others in the same situation will not

Symptoms of depression

Effects on emotion:	Effects on thinking:	Effects on behaviour:	Physical effects:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sadness • anxiety • guilt • anger • mood swings • lack of emotional responsiveness • helplessness • hopelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • frequent self criticism • self-blame • worry • pessimism • impaired memory and concentration • indecisiveness and confusion • tendency to believe others see you in a negative light • thoughts of death or suicide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • crying spells • withdrawal from others • neglect of responsibilities • loss of interest in personal appearance • loss of motivation • Engaging in risk taking behaviour such as self-harm • misuse of alcohol and other substances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • chronic fatigue • lack of energy • sleeping too much or too little • overeating or loss of appetite • constipation • weight loss or gain • irregular menstrual cycle • unexplained aches and pains

Table 4 below gives some examples, based on the Resilience Framework, of how to support children and young people with depression.

How to support children and young people with depression

Challenge	How to help them work through it
<p>A child or young person confides in you that they feel they are depressed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen and let them have the space they need to talk, it takes a lot to discuss issues such as these, so they trust in you enough to confide. Make eye contact, validate their experiences and acknowledge how brave they have been by taking the first steps to talk to you. (Belonging) • Gently try to identify what they hope to get from talking to you? Is there anything they would like you to do next? (Core Self) • Explore with the children and young people and relevant others (SENCO, Year Head, tutor, pastoral staff) whether there is anyone else who can be enlisted to support? Are there any risk issues that need considering? (Enlisting) • Think through with them their capacity to function at school. If capacity is limited then it may be necessary to make an onward referral. (Core Self) (See your school procedures or Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL))
<p>A child or young person is isolating themselves</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gently talk to them about why they have become isolated, without pressurizing them. Approach them, letting them know you are there to talk if they feel able. (Belonging) • Create an anonymous feedback mechanism within the school for YP to share how they are feeling. (Coping) • Enlist staff members to check-in with this child or young person, through acknowledging them in the corridor or in class in a coordinated way. (Belonging) • Is there another child or young person in the year group who you could enlist to support this them? (Belonging) • Run an assembly on isolation and loneliness and what support is available in the school, taking ideas from YP about how to tackle the issue within the school. (See <i>Appendix 4</i> for workshop ideas, and One Step Forward resource for additional activities at www.boingboing.org.uk)
<p>A child or young person is neglecting their self-care and personal hygiene</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This could be an indication that there is a difficulty for the young person or at home, school or both. Bear in mind this could be a symptom of a safeguarding concern • Deliver classroom sessions on supporting children and young people to take responsibility for themselves, including changes in their bodies during puberty and the importance of personal hygiene. (Core Self) (See The Resilient Classroom on supporting the young person to take responsibility for themselves http://www.boingboing.org.uk/academic-resilience-resources-directory/) • Raise awareness in the school of the underlying reasons why individuals can neglect themselves and the importance of acceptance and care towards others within the school environment. (Belonging) • Prioritise building a relationship with the child or young person to establish trust and safety, or identify someone who they have an established relationship with, who can explore on an ongoing basis if there are causes for concern. This does not need to be a teacher, just someone who has had some training and can get professional advice if needed. (Belonging) • Provide access to the basics within school, such as personal hygiene products. (Basics)

Challenge	How to help them work through it
<p>A child or young person is very angry and defensive</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When a child or young person is depressed they can feel very isolated, scared and on edge. It is important that the young person understands the boundaries in relation to their attitude and behaviour. It can also be useful to explore what is behind the behaviour. (Core Self) • Create a space for the child or young person to be heard, acknowledged and validated. (Belonging) • Depending on the child or young person's experience, do they have access to a hobby or outlet to facilitate emotional expression, or just have a laugh? (Coping) • Teach assertiveness skills so they can express themselves and be heard. (Core Self) • Provide opportunities for exercise or sport which can provide emotional release. (Basics) • Generate solutions that are created by the child or young person themselves, or with support from you or others, to encourage responsibility and autonomy. (Core Self) • Arrange parent workshops (perhaps delivered by parents for parents, or co-produced between parents and school staff) on how to support young people with their anger. (Coping) • Lead assemblies or tutor group sessions focusing on anger as a healthy emotion and exploring strategies for responding to it. (Coping) (See The Resilient Classroom section on calming down and self-soothing at http://www.boingboing.org.uk/academic-resilience-resources-directory/)

Table 4: Ways to support children and young people with depression, using the Resilience Framework.

Recommended further reading about depression

Christopher Dowrick and Susan Martin (2015) *Can I tell you about depression? A guide for friends, family and professionals*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Depression Alliance (now part of Mind):
<https://www.mind.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/depression-alliance>

Mind guide to depression
<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/depression>