

A Bridge to Safety

Adolescence can be a challenging time – for some more than others. How do you know whether your child has the “adolescent blues” or if it’s something more serious? The SOS program can help.

The goal of SOS is to help students identify signs of depression, self-injury, and suicide in themselves and others and to respond effectively. The main message of the program is **ACT**.

Acknowledge, Care, Tell:

- ✓ **ACKNOWLEDGE** that you are seeing signs of depression, self-injury, or suicide in a friend and that it is serious.
- ✓ **CARE** – let your friend know that you care about him or her, and that you are concerned that he or she needs help you cannot provide.
- ✓ **TELL** a trusted adult – take your friend with you or go alone if you need to.

TALK TO YOUR CHILD TODAY ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF RECOGNIZING WHEN THERE IS A PROBLEM AND HOW YOU CAN HELP.

Did You Know?

RESILIENCY, THE ABILITY TO COPE WITH STRESS AND ADVERSITY,

is an essential part of healthy development.

Resiliency builds self-esteem in children and helps protect them against life’s everyday challenges.

In fact, it has been shown that developing resiliency is as important as eliminating or minimizing stress.

Nurture resiliency in your child by focusing on their strengths and skills. Let them know you are there for support – they will feed off your encouragement.



Know When It's Time to ACT

A SERIOUS SITUATION

When it comes to the mental health of your child, a little information goes a long way. The first step to helping your child is recognizing that there might be a problem. Signs of depression in children can be easily confused with the ordinary struggles of growing up.

RECOGNIZING DEPRESSION...WHAT TO LOOK FOR

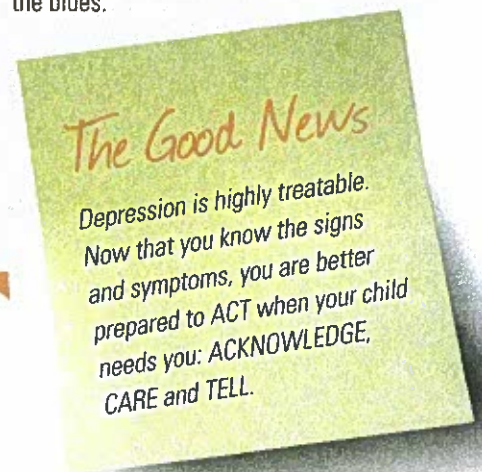
SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION:

- ✓ Depressed mood (can be sad, down, grouchy or irritable)
- ✓ Avoiding family or friends
- ✓ A decline in grades
- ✓ Struggling to complete simple tasks
- ✓ Not taking care of physical health or personal cleanliness
- ✓ Change in sleeping patterns, weight, and/or appetite
- ✓ Feelings of worthlessness and/or hopelessness
- ✓ Constant worry about body image
- ✓ Drug and/or alcohol use or abuse
- ✓ Thoughts of death, suicide, or wishes to be dead

Moodiness is common in adolescents, but if it lasts for more than two weeks it might be more than "the blues."

WHAT TO DO

Your role as a parent is to watch for warning signs and seek help. Don't try to diagnose the problem yourself. If you're unsure about your child's behavior, speak to a professional at the school or call your pediatrician. Left untreated, depression can lead to other serious problems, including drug and alcohol use, relationship problems, academic troubles, and even suicide.



My Child is Being Bullied

When children are involved in bullying, it is important for parents to be willing to take action.

Children often do not tell their parents that they are being bullied because they are embarrassed or frightened. If you suspect your child is being bullied, consider these steps:

EMPATHIZE WITH YOUR CHILD. Say bullying is wrong, that it is not their fault, and that you are glad they had the courage to tell you about it.

DOCUMENT ONGOING BULLYING. Work with your child to keep a record of all bullying incidents. If it involves cyberbullying, keep a record of all messages or postings.

HELP YOUR CHILD DEVELOP STRATEGIES AND SKILLS FOR HANDLING BULLYING. Provide suggestions for ways to respond to bullying, and help your child gain confidence by rehearsing their responses.

WORKING WITH YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL

BULLYING MAY NOT STOP WITHOUT THE SCHOOL'S HELP. Parents should never be afraid to call the school to report that their child is being bullied and ask for help to stop the bullying.

KNOW THE SCHOOL POLICIES. Ask for a copy or check the student handbook to see whether your school has standards in place that will help resolve the situation.

OPEN THE LINE OF COMMUNICATION. Call or set up an appointment to talk with your child's teacher or school counselor and establish a partnership to stop the bullying.

GET HELP FOR YOUR CHILD. Seek advice from your child's guidance counselor or other school-based health professionals. They may be able to help your child cope with the stress of being bullied.

For the full article go to: www.stopbullying.gov/parents/my_child_is_being_bullied/index.html





Staying Safe in Cyberspace

Worried about your teen's safety on the Internet? Talk to your child about these Internet Safety Rules:

I WILL THINK BEFORE I POST.

I AGREE NOT TO POST INFORMATION AND IMAGES THAT COULD PUT ME AT RISK, EMBARRASS ME, OR DAMAGE MY FUTURE, SUCH AS:

- ✓ Cell and home phone numbers.
- ✓ Home address.
- ✓ Sexual messages.
- ✓ Inappropriate pictures and videos.

I WILL RESPECT OTHER PEOPLE ONLINE.

I WILL NOT:

- ✓ Post anything rude, offensive, or threatening.
- ✓ Send or forward images and information that might embarrass, hurt, or harass someone.
- ✓ Take anyone's personal information and use it to damage his or her reputation.

I WILL PROTECT MYSELF ONLINE.

IF SOMEONE MAKES ME FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE OR IF SOMEONE IS RUDE OR OFFENSIVE, I WILL:

- ✓ Not respond.
- ✓ Save the evidence.
- ✓ Tell my parent, guardian, or another trusted adult.
- ✓ Report to the website, cell phone company, CyberTipline.com, or the police.

For the complete article, go to: <http://www.netismartz.org/Safety/SafetyTips>

Supporting Your Child's Sexuality

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth from un-accepting families are over 8 times more likely to attempt suicide than their LGBTQ peers with no or low familial rejection. Keep your children safe and supported: create a safe, accepting, and inclusive environment at home.

LOOKING FOR INFORMATION ON HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD?

The Trevor Project operates a free, confidential helpline that offers someone to talk to for LGBTQ youth, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week: **866.488.7386**.

For more information and resources visit: www.TheTrevorProject.org

Alcohol: It's More Than Just a Phase

Substance use is an identified risk factor for suicide. Unfortunately, research has shown that parents often miss this sign, assuming it's just typical adolescent behavior.

KNOW THE FACTS FIRST:

- ✓ 32% of eighth graders reported drinking in the past year.
- ✓ 64% of eighth graders say that alcohol is easy to get.

The best way to influence your child to avoid drinking is to have a strong, trusting relationship with him or her. Research shows that teens are much more likely to delay drinking when they feel they have a close, supportive tie with a parent or guardian.

HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO BUILD A STRONG, SUPPORTIVE BOND WITH YOUR CHILD:

ESTABLISH OPEN COMMUNICATION. Make it easy for your teen to talk honestly with you.

SHOW YOU CARE. Even though young teens may not always show it, they still need to know that they are important to their parents. Make it a point to regularly spend one-on-one time with your child – time when you can give him or her your loving, undivided attention.

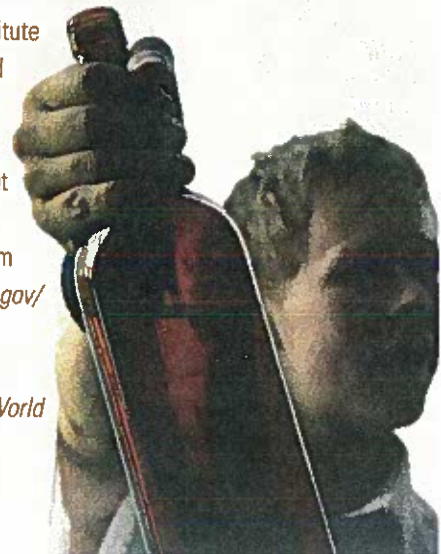
DRAW THE LINE. Set clear, realistic expectations for your child's behavior. Establish appropriate consequences for breaking rules and consistently enforce them.

OFFER ACCEPTANCE. Make sure your teen knows that you appreciate his or her efforts as well as accomplishments.

UNDERSTAND THAT YOUR CHILD IS GROWING UP. This doesn't mean a hands-off attitude. But as you guide your child's behavior, also make an effort to respect his or her growing need for independence and privacy.

Source: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (2009).

Make a Difference: Talk to your child about Alcohol. Retrieved February 29, 2012 from http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/MakeADiff_HTML/makediff.htm#TeensWorld



Self-Injury: When Your Child Is Hurting Inside

Is your child purposely hurting himself or herself? If so, this may mean that he or she is hurting inside. Self-injury affects many middle and high school students – including the child you think “has it all together.”

Self-injury is generally NOT about suicide. However, it is a serious, destructive behavior that some adolescents use to cope with intense and painful emotions. The most common examples are cutting, hitting, burning and/or scratching oneself, as well as hair pulling, and picking existing wounds. The reasons youth self-injure are complicated, but generally it's done in an attempt to relieve emotional distress.

What can you do to assist your child? First, the way you respond to self-injury can have a big impact on your child's recovery. Try not to panic; listen and be supportive. Understandably, having a child who self-injures can be very difficult, overwhelming and frightening. You will need to educate yourself on self-injury and the reasons why some young people feel the need to do this. Since most people can overcome self-injury with counseling, **THE BEST THING YOU CAN DO IS SEEK PROFESSIONAL TREATMENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.**

Contributed by: Barent Walsh, Ph.D., author of *Treating Self-Injury: A Practical Guide*, “2nd Edition, Guilford Press”.

The Art of Bouncing Back

Let's face it: parenting is tough and there's no manual. Dealing with the stress of parenting is a critical part of parenting itself: if you don't take good care of yourself, it's tough for you to care for your child.

The next time you're feeling the pressure of life closing in, try one or more of these ideas:

TAKE A BREAK. In the current economy, Americans tend to be either working long hours or facing the stress of searching for a job. Our lives are full to overflowing. Try to find a few minutes every day to sit quietly by yourself. You might feel like you can't spare the time, but the benefits will far outweigh the costs!

EXERCISE. Moving your body is a great way to blow off steam and get those positive brain chemicals known as endorphins doing their thing.

LIMIT YOUR WORRY TIME. If you find yourself worrying over the same issue over and over, make a deal with yourself: think about it for 10 minutes and then leave it alone until tomorrow. Remember that worrying about something doesn't help you find a solution!

Grab a pen and paper and jot down some things you can do to de-stress. There's only one you and you deserve to feel your best. Your child will thank you for it.



Looking out for loved ones is an important part of preventing suicide. You can call the Lifeline to speak with a crisis worker on behalf of someone you are concerned about. The crisis workers have access to local resources, and can help you identify ways to get help to your loved ones. **SO CALL 1-800-273-TALK TODAY TO HELP SAVE A LIFE.**

