



DCDSB Understanding & Supporting All Learners

What is Depression?

A major depressive disorder — usually just called “depression” — is different than the “blues.” People experiencing depression have feelings of severe despair over an extended period of time, including feelings of worthlessness and helplessness. Depression is a mental illness that affects all areas of a student’s life: emotions, cognitive functioning, physical health, relationships, and school performance. Even when students do not meet full criteria for a diagnosis of a depressive disorder, their everyday functioning can be impacted.

How having Depression can impact one's learning and academic functioning

Depression is a mental illness which impacts a student’s level of participation in learning and academic activities. Depression is associated with a cluster of behaviours that are important to recognize. You may observe some of the following:

- School absence
- Lack of participation
- Fatigue or sleepiness
- Complaints of illness
- Feelings of isolation or rejection by peers
- Irritability, sulking
- Defiant, argumentative, and/or noncompliant behaviour
- Difficulty concentrating (distractibility, restlessness)
- Failure to complete work and overly slow work pace
- Lacking in motivation
- Easily hurt feelings (crying, anger)
- Self-deprecating comments (“I’m stupid, I’m no good”)
- Dismissive attitude toward accomplishments
- Pessimistic thinking
- Lack of interest and involvement in previously enjoyed activities
- Impulsive and risky behaviour (particularly in adolescents)

Helpful Resources

About Kids Health-Sick Kids:

<https://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/Article?contentid=19&language=English&hub=mentalhealth>

ABCs of Mental Health: <https://www.sickkidscmh.ca/ABC/Parent-Resource/The-Sad-Child.aspx>

This resource is not intended for diagnostic purposes. It is to be used as a reference for your own understanding and to provide information about the different kinds of difficulties you may encounter in your classroom.

Supporting children & teens with Depression at home

- Your child’s well-being is primary and the amount of school work completed is secondary
- Encourage good sleep habits and regular exercise
- Check in with your child each day regarding their emotional status
- Review with your child their network of support (parents, relatives, & friends)
- Encourage feelings of mastery and growth mindset, viewing ‘mistakes’ as learning opportunities
- Include fun, enjoyable, & interactive activities as part of the daily routine
- Decide with your child where an appropriate workspace should be, separating a work area from a place where the child can relax and de-stress, especially when feeling overwhelmed
- Build on and highlight your child’s specific strengths and interests
- Give your child positive responsibilities (e.g., walking the dog)
- Help your child to chunk assignments and manage their time well in advance of deadlines
- Encourage your child to take initiative and be a problem solver
- Monitor your child’s amount of screen time each day
- Modify or provide alternative activities on days your child is experiencing high levels of stress
- Encourage your child to refrain from comparing their performance to others
- Promote feelings of connectedness by encouraging them to connect with others using technology
- Share your concern with your child’s teacher and discuss possible supports in the school
- Connect with your community contacts or seek support and referral information from your family doctor if you have additional concerns

