

# Depression

## What does it feel like?

Shawn has been really sad for about a month now. He used to enjoy hanging out with his friends after school and on the weekends. They used to play video games, ride bikes, and go to parties. Now, Shawn does not have the desire or energy to do any of the fun things he used to do. He feels empty and just wants to stay inside and do nothing. Then there's Keisha, who goes to the same school as Shawn. Keisha loves to go shopping, dancing, and hanging out with her friends. She's usually the one in the group that keeps everyone laughing and loves to have fun. But for the past two weeks she's not been herself. Keisha's been moody, irritable, and no fun to be around. She tries to be in a good mood and make everyone laugh, but she just can't. She is yelling at everyone and keeps bursting into tears over the smallest of things.



Both Shawn and Keisha are experiencing symptoms of depression. Depression can change your usual feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. People who are depressed may feel sad, lonely, irritable, tired, not important or valuable, lose interest in things that they usually enjoy doing, want to be alone, have trouble sleeping, have a big change in appetite, have trouble concentrating, feel that nothing will ever change, and/or may just not feel well and may experience headaches and other aches and pains. A person with depression may also have thoughts of hurting themselves or others. Feeling depressed is nothing to feel ashamed about and should be taken seriously.

## Who gets depressed?

Anyone can become depressed, children, teens, and adults from all races, cultures and backgrounds. Everyone feels sadness and some of the other feelings associated with depression, but when these feelings last for at least one week or more and are keeping the person from doing their usual activities and being successful at home, school or at work, then the person may have depression. Life events such as the break up with a boyfriend or girlfriend, parents divorcing, moving to a new place, the passing of a loved one, being bullied or picked on by peers, trying to make new friends, or adjusting to a new school can cause feelings of sadness, irritability or other unpleasant feelings. It is important to pay attention to how you are feeling, don't ignore the problem.

No one knows the exact cause of depression. People can become depressed for different reasons; some reasons that may put a person at risk for depression are:

- Heredity or brain chemistry-If someone in your family experienced depression you may have similar genes and be more likely to experience depression. Some kinds of depression are biological which means there may be a decrease in certain brain chemicals that may lead to depression.
- Traumatic Event(s) - For example the death of a loved one, divorce, fighting in the family, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, exposure to violence or a terrible event may lead to depression.
- Difficult Life Experience(s)-For example feeling alone or picked on because you are different (e.g., looks, clothes, size, color, ability, religion, sexual orientation); moving; being poor; having a physical illness or mental illness; having parents with physical or mental illness, having parents with drug and/or alcohol problems; being in foster care; or being homeless may lead to depression.

## What helps depression?

If you think you or a friend is depressed, it may help to tell someone who can help like a parent or an adult (like a relative, counselor, teacher, coach, or minister) you feel comfortable with. It's important to not to ignore how you feel. A counselor is a person who is trained to help people deal with depression; it is a good idea to talk with one at your school, in your community, or your medical provider (like a doctor or nurse). Friends are

great to talk to and they are often helpful in a lot of situations, but for serious situations like depression, it is important that you talk with an adult. If you don't feel comfortable talking to an adult by yourself, you might ask a friend to come along with you for the first meeting. Understanding more about what depression is and what can help to reduce it, increasing positive coping skills, and learning more about how to better problem-solve and handle difficult social situations are all things that can be worked on with a depressed student in counseling. If you are thinking of hurting yourself or anyone else, it is critical that you get help immediately. Tell an adult, go to an emergency room, call a youth crisis hotline, just be sure to get the help you need now!

### **Related Links**

[http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/your\\_mind/feeling\\_sad/depression.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/feeling_sad/depression.html)

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