



COULD MY PARENT BE

DEPRESSED





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## MY PARENT HAS... IS MADE POSSIBLE IN PART BY



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## WHERE?

In Print : [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

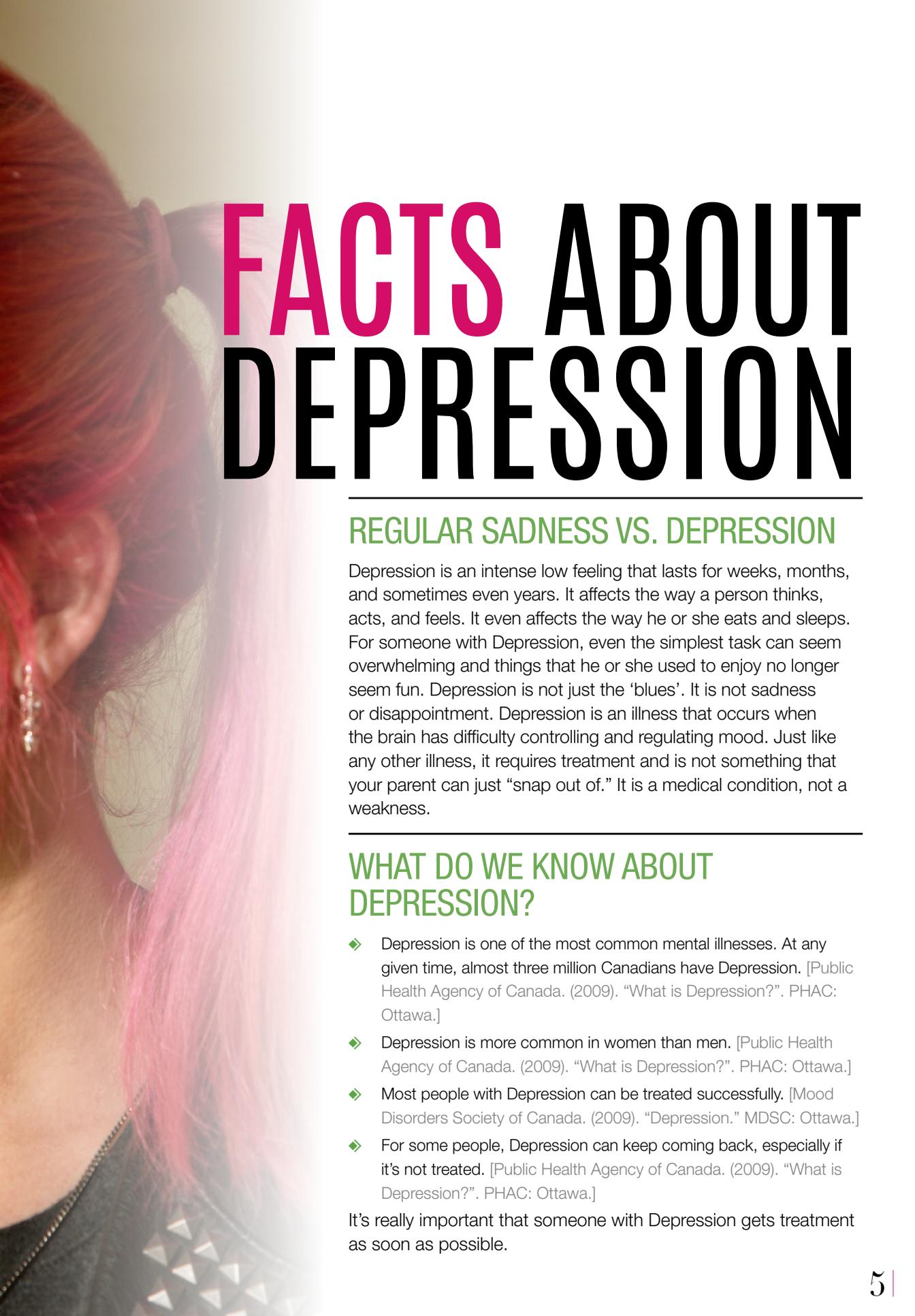
Online : [TeenMentalHealth.org](https://www.teenmentalhealth.org)

# WITNESS THE PRODUCTION

**H**aving a parent with Depression can be frightening, frustrating, and stressful. When someone you care about has a mental illness, you can feel helpless and wonder if you might be to blame. You are not at fault. There is nothing you could have done to cause your parent's Depression. It may feel like everything is out of your control, but try not to lose hope. Depression is very treatable and there are people who can help you and your parent recover. You are not alone!

This book will help you understand more about Depression and what you can do to cope with your parent's illness.





# FACTS ABOUT DEPRESSION

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## REGULAR SADNESS VS. DEPRESSION

Depression is an intense low feeling that lasts for weeks, months, and sometimes even years. It affects the way a person thinks, acts, and feels. It even affects the way he or she eats and sleeps. For someone with Depression, even the simplest task can seem overwhelming and things that he or she used to enjoy no longer seem fun. Depression is not just the ‘blues’. It is not sadness or disappointment. Depression is an illness that occurs when the brain has difficulty controlling and regulating mood. Just like any other illness, it requires treatment and is not something that your parent can just “snap out of.” It is a medical condition, not a weakness.

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## WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT DEPRESSION?

- ◆ Depression is one of the most common mental illnesses. At any given time, almost three million Canadians have Depression. [Public Health Agency of Canada. (2009). “What is Depression?”. PHAC: Ottawa.]
- ◆ Depression is more common in women than men. [Public Health Agency of Canada. (2009). “What is Depression?”. PHAC: Ottawa.]
- ◆ Most people with Depression can be treated successfully. [Mood Disorders Society of Canada. (2009). “Depression.” MDSC: Ottawa.]
- ◆ For some people, Depression can keep coming back, especially if it’s not treated. [Public Health Agency of Canada. (2009). “What is Depression?”. PHAC: Ottawa.]

It’s really important that someone with Depression gets treatment as soon as possible.

# HOW DO YOU KNOW IF SOMEONE HAS DEPRESSION?

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Depression is diagnosed by a mental health professional (e.g., a doctor, psychologist, or clinical nurse practitioner with training in mental health) when someone has a number of specific symptoms. A Depressive Disorder can persist for the entire life of a person with periods of time when the person is Depressed (this is called a Major Depressive Episode) and times when the person is not Depressed or is showing only mild symptoms of Depression. Different people who have Depression have different life patterns of when Depressive Episodes come and when they are not present. Sometimes, the Depression can be part of another mental illness called Bipolar Disorder. If your parent has Bipolar Disorder see: [My Parent Has Bipolar Disorder](#)

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## 1 Major Depressive Disorder

Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) is a mood disorder where the person has at least one (but usually more than one) Major Depressive Episode (MDE) over the course of his or her life.

A MDE is a period of at least two weeks (but usually much longer) where for most of the time, the person has felt sad or depressed or hasn't enjoyed the things he or she normally likes to do. He or she will also have at least five of the symptoms in the list below, which cause significant distress and major difficulties in his or her daily life.

- ◆ Eats much less than normal or much more than normal
- ◆ Sleeps much less than normal or much more than normal
- ◆ Moves restlessly or barely moves at all
- ◆ Feels really tired and lacks energy
- ◆ Loses feelings of pleasure or enjoyment
- ◆ Feels worthless, hopeless, or guilty (without a good reason)
- ◆ Has trouble concentrating or making decisions
- ◆ Loses interest in activities that he or she usually enjoys
- ◆ Has thoughts of death and dying, including suicidal thoughts and plans
- ◆ Attempts suicide

## 2 Persistent Depressive Disorder (Dysthymia)

Persistent Depressive Disorder is a mood disorder where the person feels low and depressed most of the time for at least two years (one year in children and teenagers).

He or she will also have at least two of the symptoms in the list below, which cause significant distress and difficulties in his or her daily life.

Persistent Depressive Disorder is similar to MDD but the symptoms are less severe and it lasts for years.

- ◆ Eats much less than normal or much more than normal
- ◆ Sleeps much less than normal or much more than normal
- ◆ Feels really tired and lacks energy
- ◆ Has low self-esteem
- ◆ Feels worthless, hopeless, or guilty (without a good reason)
- ◆ Has trouble concentrating or making decisions

## 3 Major Depression with Seasonal Pattern (Seasonal Affective Disorder)

Major Depression with Seasonal Pattern is a mood disorder where the person experiences MDEs at certain times of the year, repeatedly for several years.

In Major Depression with Seasonal Pattern, MDEs most often occur in the Fall and Winter months and decrease or disappear in the Spring and Summer months.

- ◆ Symptoms of a MDE (described above).
- ◆ MDE appears only during a specific time of year, for at least the last 2 years.
- ◆ The person has experienced more seasonal MDEs than nonseasonal MDEs in his or her lifetime.

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## WHAT CAUSES DEPRESSION?

The causes may be different for everyone and are very complex. Depression is not caused by the day to day stresses of life. Some causes include:

- ◆ **Genetics:** Depression tends to run in families. So if someone in your immediate family (parent or brother/sister) has Depression, you are more likely to develop Depression than someone without Depression in his or her family.
- ◆ **Trauma and Stress:** Experiencing major stressors (e.g., relationship breakup, job loss) or significant trauma (e.g., death of a loved one, abuse, or neglect; especially as a child) can trigger Depression in certain people. Research has found that the impact of stressors may depend on genetics, as some people's genetics make them more vulnerable to major stressors than others. Once a person has had a Major Depressive Episode, he or she may be more likely to have another episode triggered by a major life stressor.
- ◆ **Illness:** Certain medical conditions and medications can sometimes lead to Depression.

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## CO-OCCURRING DISORDERS

It's not uncommon for people with Depression to also have other mental illnesses. People with Depression may also have Substance Use Disorders (e.g., Alcohol or Drug Addiction) or Anxiety Disorders.

# TREATING DEPRESSION

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Depression is very treatable but it takes time and work. Your parent won't get better overnight. There is no set time for how long treatment will last, but most treatments take at least 12 weeks to see noticeable improvements, so it's important to be patient and supportive. Your parent may need to be in treatment for a long time to prevent relapse. A relapse is when an illness comes back after it has been effectively treated.

Well-established treatments for Major Depressive Disorder and Dysthymic Disorder include some types of psychotherapies (i.e., talking therapies), as well as some kinds of medicines. Often a psychotherapy and medication will be prescribed together. Major Depression with seasonal pattern is commonly treated using something called light therapy, although psychotherapy and medication may also be helpful.

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## TYPE OF TREATMENT

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### 1 Medication

Medications called antidepressants often help lessen symptoms by helping your parent's brain function better. There are a number of different medications that his or her doctor might choose to prescribe. Medicines known as Serotonin Specific Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) are the most commonly used. Medications usually take 4-6 weeks to start working, although it may take longer to find out which medication works best for your parent.

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### 2 Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS)

TMS is a relatively new treatment that involves putting a device that sends magnetic pulses through the person's head. The person can't feel the pulses but they are thought to positively influence how the brain works.

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### 3 Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT)

ECT is usually used only if other treatments don't work. It involves sending a small electric shock through the brain, which causes a small seizure. This helps the brain to work better and lessens symptoms of Depression.

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### 4 Light Therapy

Light therapy is when a person is exposed to bright full spectrum lights, usually for 30 minutes to an hour every morning. This light is meant to simulate summertime sunlight.



## 5 Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy is talk therapy that can be done one-on-one (just your parent and the therapist) or in a group (with other adults who also have Depression). Psychotherapy helps your parent's brain function better. Most psychotherapies take up to 12 weeks of continued treatments. Some treatments used in psychotherapy include:

- ◆ **Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT):** CBT helps people learn to problem solve and change their thoughts and behaviours into more positive ones.
- ◆ **Family-Focused Therapy:** This therapy helps family members understand Depression and learn coping strategies.
- ◆ **Psychoeducation:** This is usually done in a group and is helpful in teaching people to recognize their symptoms so they can seek treatment when needed and help prevent relapses.
- ◆ **Interpersonal Therapy (IPT):** IPT helps the person deal with his or her relationship problems and build stronger social support.

## 6 Hospitalization

Although not an actual treatment, people with Depression sometimes need to be hospitalized for their own safety. This usually only happens if the Depression is severe or if the person is suicidal. When their symptoms improve, they leave the hospital.

For important information on how to get the best treatment, check out:  
[teenmentalhealth.org/for-families-and-teens/evidence-based-medicine/](https://teenmentalhealth.org/for-families-and-teens/evidence-based-medicine/)  
[teenmentalhealth.org/images/resources/communicating\\_with\\_healthcare\\_providers\\_person\\_version.pdf](https://teenmentalhealth.org/images/resources/communicating_with_healthcare_providers_person_version.pdf)

# WHAT YOU CAN DO?

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Start by putting yourself first. Do things that you enjoy and that help you cope with stress. When you look after yourself, it makes it easier to deal with the challenges of your parent's Depression. Don't forget that you're the kid in this relationship - it's not your responsibility to look after your parent. Putting yourself first does not mean that you're abandoning your parent or that you don't love him or her. Here are some ways that you can help your parent, without making his or her Depression your responsibility:

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## 1 Educate yourself about the illness.

Understanding what Depression is and how it affects your parent will help you feel less frustrated and more supportive. The library is a good resource for books on Depression, as are the trusted websites that are listed on page 28. The internet has loads of information about mental illness; just know that not all of it is accurate. In fact, the information on some websites is more wrong than right. Page 28 has a list of helpful websites that can be trusted.

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## 2 Be prepared for emergencies.

It's tempting to pretend that everything is fine but it's so important for you to be prepared in case something goes wrong. Have a plan about what to do and where to go, as well as a list of emergency contacts, just in case. Use the tear out pages at the back of this book to write down your emergency contacts.

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## 3 Talk to someone.

Talking to other family members about your parent's Depression can be a relief because they often understand what you're going through. Just remember that not all people will have the same experience as you and not everyone is comfortable talking about mental illness. If you can't find support within your family, it's okay to talk to a trusted friend. Try to respect your parent's privacy (and consider asking your parent how he or she feels about you sharing that he or she has a mental illness) but remember that you have nothing to be ashamed of. Some people may be judgmental or unkind. This is usually because they don't understand Depression or what it's like to have a family member who has Depression. Your parent's illness is not a reflection of you and does not make your family less than any other family. You can choose to react negatively to these people; you can choose to ignore the things they say; or you can choose to stand up to them and increase their awareness of mental illness. It's up to you. As important as it is to try to increase people's understanding of mental illness, not everyone is willing to listen. Pick and choose your battles and try to confide only in people you trust. There's no shame in just ignoring someone's negative comments if it doesn't seem worth your energy.

## **4 Learn how to communicate.**

Try to avoid arguments and accusations when you get frustrated. Page 12 has some tips for communicating with your parents.

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## **5 Let your parent know you care.**

It can be really frustrating and upsetting when your parent has Depression. It's easy to focus only on the negative, especially when your parent is feeling negative. Remember that Depression skews your parent's thoughts and makes things seem worse than they really are. Try not to let their negative thoughts and comments affect your own thoughts and behaviours. Remind your parent that you care and are trying to help him or her remember that things aren't all bad.

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## **6 Be patient and don't take it personally.**

Depression affects the way your parent sees the world. He or she may not want to do the things he or she used to like to do and it may be hard for your parent to attend or participate in your school events or games. Although it's difficult, try not to take it personally. Be patient with your parent when you can and recognize that the Depression is making him or her act this way. It's not a reflection of how he or she feels about you.

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## **7 Keep in mind quality, not quantity.**

Sometimes it's better to spend shorter periods of time with your parent doing something enjoyable when he or she has energy, rather than giving up lots of your time trying to care for him or her. It's okay to set boundaries; it doesn't make you a bad kid.

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## **8 Understand your feelings.**

Become familiar with how your parent's illness affects you. Do you worry too much or feel neglected? Talking to a counselor, or a trusted friend or family member can help you sort through your thoughts. Keeping a journal of your feelings can also help you put things in perspective and understand yourself better.

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## **9 Accept what you can't control.**

You can't control your parent's behaviour or the fact that he or she has Depression. People can only control their own thoughts, feelings, and actions. Trying to change your parent is frustrating and futile. Focus on the things you can control (like your reactions to your parent's behaviour) and try to let the other things go.

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## **10 Appreciate the fun times.**

Remember that your parent's symptoms may come and go. Take advantage of the good times and have fun with your parents. Try not to hold a grudge because of how they acted when they were depressed. It's important to have fun together when you can, because having good times to remember will help get you through the difficult times.

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## **11 Do what you love.**

Doing things you love to do can take your mind off problems with your family and remind you of the good things in your life.



# TALKING TO YOUR PARENT

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When your parent has Depression, it can feel like you're walking on eggshells around him or her. It can be hard to find the right thing to say or to figure out how to tell your parent what's on your mind. Here are a few tips to help you out:

- 1 Be respectful and polite.** This can be a challenge if your parent is feeling especially negative or has missed out on something that he or she promised you they would do. Try taking a deep breath and remember that Depression is making them act this way and you don't have to join the negativity.

**2 Think of your parent as a person and talk to them the way you would want someone to talk to you.** It's easy to think of our parents only as parents or only as someone with a mental illness. They're more than either of those roles and treating them as such goes a long way.

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**3 Avoid blaming.** Even if your parent was at fault, blaming them for whatever has happened will only make them defensive and less likely to listen. Use "I" statements whenever you can. They communicate your message without causing the other person to feel as defensive. For example, instead of saying "You forgot about my soccer game again," say "I was hurt when I realized that you weren't at my soccer game." This puts the emphasis on how it made you feel, instead of what your parent did wrong.

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**4 Express your feelings.** Even though your parent has Depression, he or she is still your parent. Your feelings matter just as much as his or her feelings. Tell your parent when you're upset, stressed out, scared, and even happy. Expressing those feelings will help improve your mood and it's important that your parent is aware of how you're feeling.

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**5 Choose a suitable time and place to talk to your parent if the topic is sensitive.** If you have something important to discuss, make sure that you have some privacy. The middle of the grocery store is probably not a great spot for an intimate or emotional conversation. If your parent tends to feel better during a certain time of day (e.g., after supper or first thing in the morning), plan to talk to them then. It will make it easier for both of you. Avoid having a serious conversation with your parent if he or she is feeling sick or using alcohol/drugs.

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**6 Speak with a trusted adult first.** If you have to discuss something serious with your parent, whether it's about you or about their Depression, it can help to speak with a trusted adult first. This can mean another family member, a family friend, or a counselor. You can run things by the trusted adult as a trial run and they can even accompany you to talk to your parent, if you feel that's appropriate and helpful.

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**7 Be prepared for denial and negativity.** Depression makes people see everything in a negative light. Your parent might not agree with what you are telling them, might skew the conversation negatively, and may deny that there is a problem. This denial could be because he or she is trying to protect you or it could be that your parent doesn't want to believe that he or she is depressed.

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**8 If you are not comfortable speaking to your parent face-to-face, writing a letter can be a good alternative.** A letter allows you to express how you feel without your emotions confusing you. It also gives your parent the opportunity to read it on their own time. Giving them some time to process what you needed to say allows them to be less defensive than they may be if they were confronted in person. A good idea when writing a letter is to put it away for a day when you've finished, and then read it again to make sure you've said what you really want to say.

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It is not your job to take care of your parent. This information is meant to help you better understand your parent's illness so you can know what to expect and be better prepared to cope. Your job is to take care of you and do your part in trying to have a good relationship with your parent.

QUESTION  
& ANSWER



**Q** Am I betraying my parent if I talk about them?

**A** No, it's important for you to talk about how your parent's Depression is affecting you. Just make sure that the person you talk to is someone that you trust (and if possible, someone that your parent also trusts). Remember that you have nothing to be ashamed of.

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**Q** Did I cause my parent to have Depression?

**A** No, absolutely not. Nothing you could do would cause your parents to have Depression. Depression is a medical illness of the brain, just like diabetes is a medical illness of the pancreas.

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**Q** Does my parent even like me?

**A** Sometimes people with mental illness don't have the ability to put themselves in another person's shoes and realize how their words affect other people. Depression causes people to see things very negatively and it can result in your parent saying something hurtful or insensitive to you. Remember that even though your parent has Depression, it is not okay for him or her to say rude, inappropriate, or hurtful things to you. Although it can be really tough, try not to take what your parent says personally. If conversations become very negative, do what you can to remove yourself from the situation.

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**Q** Will I get Depression too?

**A** You get your genes from your biological parents, and although your genes contribute to Depression, that does not mean that you will get the disorder. This means that although it's possible that you will develop Depression, there's also a possibility that you won't. There are many things you can do to stay healthy and perhaps even decrease your risk of developing Depression. Look after yourself, eat healthy, get plenty of sleep, and learn and use positive coping skills (see page 17-19).



# DEALING WITH YOUR EMOTIONS

# GUILT

When someone you love has Depression, it's not unusual to experience guilt about feeling:

- ◆ Happy
- ◆ Angry with your parent
- ◆ Like you don't want to spend time with your parent
- ◆ Like you can't make your parent better

Although it's totally normal to feel guilty, remember that your parent's illness is not your fault. You haven't done anything to cause his or her Depression and you have every right to feel and express happiness, anger, sadness, fear, or any other emotion. Try to remind yourself that you can't control or change your parent's emotions, thoughts, or behaviour. He or she has to do that on his or her own. Be caring and thoughtful, but put yourself first. Just because anxiety is trying to control your parent's life, doesn't mean you have to let it control yours.

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# ANGER

Anger is an important emotion. It's totally okay to feel angry at times. Rather than feeling guilty about your anger, try to focus on ways that you can better manage it. You can learn to better understand what your anger means to you and you can even learn how to be more in charge of your anger. Effective anger management takes practice. Here are some tips that may help:

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## 1 Burn off some steam.

Exercise is a great way to manage your anger. Go for a run, try yoga, take a kickboxing class – whatever works best for you. Working out helps your body “release” emotions, plus you get the benefits of exercise.

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## 2 Breathe deeply.

Take a minute and try the box breathing exercise on page 19. Taking deep breaths slows your heart rate and helps you calm down.

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## 3 Learn to problem solve.

Figuring out what exactly is making you angry can make a huge difference in how you feel. Often, what we think we're angry about and what we're actually angry about are not the same thing. Later on, when you have some distance from the situation, think about the point when you got angry, what happened, and what thoughts were going through your head. Understanding the problem goes a long way towards finding a good solution.

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## 4 Give yourself a break.

If you feel yourself getting angry, walk away from the situation for a little while, if you can. This works in a similar way as counting to ten, giving you time to calm down and think rationally about how to deal with the situation that is making you angry.

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## 5 Count to ten.

It sounds cliché but it can help. Taking a pause before you respond helps your body and your mind calm down and you can then think more rationally about how to react.

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## 6 Express your feelings.

Sometimes, telling someone why you are angry can help you feel better. Instead of being aggressive, try to calmly and assertively express your feelings. When you're calm, it's easier for people to listen to what you are actually saying, instead of only reacting to your anger.

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If you've tried all of these tips and are still having a hard time managing your anger, it is a good idea to talk to a counselor. For information on how and where to find support, see page 27.

# DEALING WITH YOUR STRESS

Having a parent with Depression can be really stressful and that stress can show itself in many ways:

## 1 Physical symptoms.

Headache; neck ache; indigestion; stomach ache; sweaty palms; racing heart; irregular sleeping patterns.

## 2 Emotional symptoms.

Crying; anger; loneliness; forgetfulness; diminished sense of humour; irritability; hopelessness; unhappiness; indecisiveness; sensitivity; anxiety.

## 3 Behavioural symptoms.

Drinking, smoking or using drugs; needing to be in control; withdrawal or avoidance; acting aggressively; feeling restless; grinding teeth; eating poorly; having nightmares.

Although a little bit of stress is healthy, the stress of having a parent with Depression can at times feel overwhelming. The coping strategies below can help you stay calm and prevent the stress from taking over your life. If after a little practice, these strategies don't seem to be helping, it's a good idea to talk to a counselor. See page 27 for information on how to find support.

## COPING STRATEGIES

### 1 Exercise.

Daily physical activity improves your health and mood, and helps you get rid of stress. Even something as simple as going for a walk can help.

### 2 Eat healthy.

Eating a balanced diet gives your body the fuel it needs to help combat stress. Try not to skip meals, eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, and go easy on the junk food.

### 3 Limit caffeine.

Caffeine can make your heart race, which can make you feel worse.

### 4 Sleep.

Getting 8-9 hours of sleep each night will help you feel better the next day. If you have trouble sleeping, try the Sleep tips on next page.

### 5 Daily relaxation time.

Take time each day to relax. Read a book, watch a movie, play a game, listen to music – whatever helps you relax. Also learn and use the Box Breathing exercise on the next page.

### 6 Build healthy relationships.

It's important to have a good support network of people you trust.

**7 Go outside.**  
Staying inside all the time can be really draining. Getting outside and enjoying the sun and fresh air can improve your mood and remind you that things are not as bleak as they sometimes appear. Try to link this with exercise if you can, even a brisk walk outdoors may help.

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**8 Manage your time.**  
Learn how to schedule and prioritize your projects and other responsibilities — it will help you feel more in control, more productive, and less overwhelmed. Use a timetable organizer and check it out every morning to help you plan your day.

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**9 Accept what you can't change.**  
Not being able to change your parent's behaviour can be really frustrating. It's important to remember that the only thing you can control is your own behaviour. Try not to dwell on the things you can't change and focus on the things you can (e.g., how you react to other people's behaviour).

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**10 Stay away from alcohol and drugs.**  
Although you may feel better in the short-term, alcohol and drugs will not resolve your stress. They'll only give you a false sense of confidence and may make your problems worse in the long run. This includes cigarettes!

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**11 Be realistic.**  
Depression can make your parent interpret things as more negative than they actually are. Remind yourself that Depression is skewing your parent's perspective and things actually may not be as bad your parent believes them to be.

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**12 Acknowledge your feelings.**  
It's okay to feel angry or upset once in a while. You don't have to bottle up your feelings. Try talking to the people in your support network. Sharing your feelings with someone else can feel like a weight is lifted off your chest.

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## BOX BREATHING

If possible, sit and close your eyes. If not, just focus on your breathing.

- ◆ Inhale your breath (preferably through your nose) for 4 seconds.
- ◆ Hold your breath for 4 more seconds. You're not trying to deprive yourself of air; you're just giving the air a few seconds to fill your lungs.
- ◆ Exhale slowly through your mouth for 4 seconds.
- ◆ Pause for 4 seconds (without speaking) before breathing in again.

Repeat this process as many times as necessary. Even 30 seconds of deep breathing will help you feel calmer and more in control.

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## SLEEP TIPS

- ◆ Go to sleep and wake up within 30 minutes of the same time every day.
- ◆ Follow a regular nightly routine before you go to bed. A series of steps that you follow every night cues your body that it's time to fall asleep.
- ◆ Don't read, do homework, or text your friends from your bed. This teaches your body that when you're in bed, you should be sleeping.
- ◆ Avoid electronic screens (TV, computer, phone, tablet, etc.) for at least one hour before bed, and try not to bring them into your bedroom.

For more information about sleep, check out: [teenmentalhealth.org/understanding-mental-health/sleep](https://teenmentalhealth.org/understanding-mental-health/sleep)





# FAMILY RULES

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You might have unspoken “rules” in your family. It’s important to be aware of these hidden “rules” because sometimes they may be unhealthy. Here are some rules that are worth breaking:

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**1 Don’t trust.** When you’re frequently disappointed by broken promises, eventually you learn not to trust what people say to you. Sometimes you don’t trust other people at all.

**Break it!** We make our assumptions about the world based on our experiences – that can make it easy to not trust anyone else when you come from a family that constantly breaks your trust. Not everyone will disappoint you. There are lots of honest and trustworthy people in the world. Give someone a chance to be there for you when you need it.

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**2 Don’t feel.** When you’re constantly disappointed and hurt by someone you love, you learn to shut off your emotions so that other people can’t hurt you the same way.

**Break it!** Although it’s tempting to sometimes not feel at all, emotions are an essential part of living a fulfilling and rewarding life. Don’t let your parent’s illness stop you from living the full life you deserve.

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**3 Don’t talk.** When a lot of negative things happen in a family, you can learn not to talk about your problems because it’s uncomfortable.

**Break it!** It may be uncomfortable at first, but it’s so important to talk about what’s going on in your family. Chances are – someone else feels the way you do. Sharing your feelings with each other can help to release stress and starts you on the path toward resolving family issues. You can’t solve a problem if no one will admit it exists.



# SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Sometimes people with Depression turn to drugs or alcohol to try to control their symptoms. This usually only helps for a very short period of time, as their symptoms reappear when the substance wears off. It also can be quite dangerous as some people may build up tolerance when they use alcohol and drugs often. This means that they need more and more of the substance to get the same effect. If someone is frequently using drugs or alcohol to cope with Depression, they are at risk for substance use problems (also called alcohol or drug addiction). This includes cigarettes! Addiction can cause family problems, social problems, financial problems, and health problems, including:

- ◆ Neglecting, hurting, and losing family and friends because they spend so much time using or trying to obtain the substance.
- ◆ Engaging in moody, unstable, or violent behaviour, often accompanied by anger management problems.
- ◆ Spending a lot of money on the substance and sometimes failing to pay necessary bills and expenses (e.g., electricity, groceries).
- ◆ Trouble keeping a job because they show up late, are hung over, or even use the substance at work.
- ◆ Behaving in dangerous or risky ways. People with addictions can go to great lengths to get a hold of the substance and may put themselves or others in danger.
- ◆ Incurring a number of health problems, including problems with the stomach, heart, liver, and central nervous system.

# SIGNS OF DRUG OVERDOSE & ALCOHOL POISONING

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## SIGNS OF DRUG OVERDOSE

- ◆ Loss of consciousness
  - ◆ Chest pain
  - ◆ Heavy sweating
  - ◆ Delusions/hallucinations
  - ◆ Faster breathing
  - ◆ Seizures or uncontrollable twitching
  - ◆ Fever
  - ◆ Racing or irregular heartbeat
  - ◆ Cold or pale skin
- 

## SIGNS OF ALCOHOL POISONING

- ◆ Loss of consciousness
  - ◆ Slow or irregular heart beat
  - ◆ Vomiting
  - ◆ Seizure
  - ◆ Low body temperature
  - ◆ Pale or bluish skin
- 

## CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY

Someone with alcohol poisoning or a drug overdose may get brain damage or die. It is essential that you call for help immediately if you notice any of the signs listed above.

# SUICIDE

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Although your parent has Depression, he or she is not necessarily suicidal. Many people with Depression do not have suicidal thoughts and never attempt suicide. However, having Depression does increase the risk for suicide so, you should be aware of the warning signs that your parent may be considering suicide, just in case:

- ◆ Intense hopelessness or sadness
  - ◆ Preoccupation with death
  - ◆ Loss of interest in regular activities
  - ◆ Withdrawal from family and friends
  - ◆ Talking about what it will be like when they're gone
  - ◆ Giving away valued possessions
- 

## WHAT CAN I DO?

It's okay to ask your parent if they are suicidal and tell them that you are concerned. Asking about suicide will not put the idea in his or her head. If you suspect your parent is suicidal, the best thing you can do is tell a trusted adult. If there is no one you trust, call 911. Suicide risk is serious and you cannot handle this on your own.

Knowing your parent is suicidal may cause you to feel extremely anxious, sad, angry, or guilty. Talking to a counselor about what you are going through can be really helpful. See next page for help getting support.

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## WHY WOULD SOMEONE WANT TO DIE BY SUICIDE?

There are many reasons why someone might attempt suicide, including:

- ◆ To escape from problems that may seem overwhelming
- ◆ To end painful feelings of sadness, rejection, or loss
- ◆ To avoid disappointing others
- ◆ To stop feelings of shame and guilt
- ◆ Because they feel that life isn't worth living
- ◆ Because they feel worthless and hopeless about the future
- ◆ Because alcohol or drugs have altered their thinking and mood
- ◆ Because they believe that others would be better off without them

People who die by suicide usually believe that it is the only way out. Their thinking is clouded and they are not able to realize how their actions will affect the people who care about them. Treatment of Depression decreases risk for suicide.



# GETTING SUPPORT

Surrounding yourself with a good support system of friends, relatives, neighbours, and other people you trust is really helpful. A good support system will:

- ◆ Understand the challenges that having a parent with a mental disorder creates for you
- ◆ Listen to you when you need someone to talk to
- ◆ Notice when you're not acting/feeling like yourself
- ◆ Give you honest and helpful advice when you need it
- ◆ Encourage you
- ◆ Help you cope when you're having a rough time
- ◆ Be there for you when you need them
- ◆ Remind you that you're not alone
- ◆ Hang out with you.

## 1 Find a safe environment.

If you feel unsafe at home - it's okay to go to a friend's house. Just make sure that a trusted adult knows where you are. Don't run away and put yourself in danger.

## 2 Join a support group for families.

Many communities have support groups for mental illness where you can talk openly about what you are going through. Some communities have groups that are specifically for family members. If there are no local groups, there are also online groups for families affected by mental illness.

## 3 Talk to a counselor.

If you have a school counselor, it may be helpful to talk to them. They can often provide information on Depression or tell you about other local resources or support groups for families.

## 4 Know emergency contacts.

If your parent gets abusive or out of control, it's important to know the phone numbers of trusted people you can call for help.

# EMERGENCY CONTACT

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

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## VIOLENCE:

If your parent becomes violent or if you are unsure about your safety or the safety of others, you need to act. Call 911. If violence is occurring, it is important that you get help from a counselor, police officer, or doctor. **DO NOT WAIT!** The sooner the issue is addressed, the better the outcome.

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## MAKE A ULYSSES AGREEMENT

A Ulysses agreement is like a safety plan for your family. The purpose of this agreement is to make sure that you and your siblings will be taken care of if your parent's illness gets to the point that your parent is not able to take healthy control of his/her life. It's a good idea to sit down with your entire family and come up with a list of warning signs that your parent's illness may be worsening and what you should do if that happens. The agreement should also include who you should contact and a safe place you could go if your parent is unwell. It would also be a good idea for your family to include trusted relatives or close family friends when creating this agreement, so that they know what could happen and how to provide support if necessary. There is a sample Ulysses agreement in the back of this book for you to use.



# INFO

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These are places you can find more information about mental health/mental disorders and get help:

## 1 Family Doctor.

Talk to your family doctor about your concerns. Your doctor can answer questions you may have and may be able to connect you with a good psychologist, counselor, and/or support group.

## 2 Emergency.

If you or your parent are feeling suicidal or are in crisis, go to your local hospital's emergency room immediately.

## 3 School Counselor or Nurse.

Your school counselor or nurse may have helpful resources for you, including books, pamphlets, and contacts in the community.

## 4 Internet.

The internet has loads of information about mental illness; just know that not all of it is accurate. In fact, the information on some websites is more wrong than right. The next page has a list of helpful websites that can be trusted.

## 5 Health Boards.

Many communities have a health board with information on different support groups and other resources. They are often located in community centres, malls, and grocery stores.

## 6 Phonebook.

The yellow pages have lists of local support groups, counselors, and youth health centres, some of which may be helpful for you.

## 7 Library.

Check your local community or school library for books to help you understand more about Depression.

## 8 Kids Help Phone.

The Kids Help Phone has counselors who answer phone calls and online questions from young people 24/7. You can reach them at 1-800-668-6868 or at [www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca)

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## TALK TO A COUNSELOR OR FAMILY DOCTOR

Sometimes you may need to talk to someone who is experienced in helping teens, like a counselor, psychologist, or doctor. Don't be afraid to ask for this if you need it. Realizing you need more help and looking for it is a sign of strength, not weakness. A counselor or doctor can help you:

- ◆ Understand more about your parent's mental illness
- ◆ Understand and express your emotions in a positive way
- ◆ Learn to cope in healthy ways
- ◆ Make positive changes in your own life
- ◆ Build healthy relationships
- ◆ Set limits and protect yourself

Sometimes it helps to make a list of questions before visiting a counselor or doctor. Remember, what you say will remain confidential unless you are in a situation where harm can happen to you. Discuss with your doctor or counselor how they will keep your discussions in confidence.



# HELPFUL WEBSITES

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Teen Mental Health: [www.teenmentalhealth.org](http://www.teenmentalhealth.org)

Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre: [www.keltymentalhealth.ca](http://www.keltymentalhealth.ca)

National Institute of Mental Health: [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

Canadian Mental Health Association: [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)

Depression Hurts: [www.depressionhurts.ca](http://www.depressionhurts.ca)

Mood Disorders Society of Canada: [www.mooddisorderscanada.ca](http://www.mooddisorderscanada.ca)

Mental Health Foundation: [www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

# WRITE ABOUT YOU

Writing in a journal can be a really good way to express your feelings. Reading over what you've written later may help you make sense of your feelings and you might even feel better. Feel free to use the questions below if you're having trouble getting started.

I still have questions about \_\_\_\_\_

I'm concerned my parent will \_\_\_\_\_

I'm worried I will \_\_\_\_\_

I'm going to share my feelings with \_\_\_\_\_

My friends will help me \_\_\_\_\_

I'm going to take care of myself by \_\_\_\_\_

Things that make me feel better include \_\_\_\_\_

When I am scared, I will \_\_\_\_\_

I can trust \_\_\_\_\_

Things I like about myself include \_\_\_\_\_

I will stay connected to my family by \_\_\_\_\_

What I love about my family is \_\_\_\_\_

I get frustrated when \_\_\_\_\_



# EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

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My parent's doctor's name: \_\_\_\_\_

My parent's doctor's phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Trusted adult/relative #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Trusted adult/relative's phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

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Trusted adult/relative #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Trusted adult/relative's phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

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Police phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Crisis hotline: \_\_\_\_\_

Closest hospital phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

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If I need to leave and go to a safe environment, I will go: \_\_\_\_\_

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Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Medication my parent is on: \_\_\_\_\_

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**IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR SAFETY OR THE  
SAFETY OF SOMEONE ELSE, CALL 911!**



# ULYSSES AGREEMENT

NAMES OF PEOPLE AWARE OF THIS AGREEMENT:

Name			
Signature			
Contact Info			

PARENT'S MEDICAL CONDITION:

Diagnosis			
Symptoms			
Medications (name, dose)			



IF PARENT IS UNWELL, CHILDREN WILL BE TEMPORARILY TAKEN CARE OF BY:

Name			
Relation			
Contact Info			

SPECIFIC NEEDS OF CHILDREN (dates of births, health card number, medical issues):

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SPECIFIC CARE CONTACTS FOR CHILDREN INCLUDE:

	Name	Contact Info
Family Doctor		
Dentist		
School		
Friend		

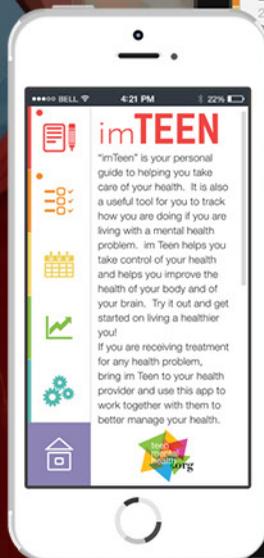


# imTEEN

Taking charge of your health



- ASSESSMENT
- CHECKLIST
- CALENDAR
- VISUAL REPORTS



# TRANSITIONS



amazon.com

Available on the  
App Store

Available on the  
iBookstore

Available on Amazon.com and the Apple iBookStore. The App is free for download at the Apple App Store & online: [teenmentalhealth.org/resources/entries/transitions](http://teenmentalhealth.org/resources/entries/transitions)



# FAMILY PACK

better mental health for you & your family

Support yourself and your family members in better understanding mental disorders and how to deal with them. If you have a mental disorder, are supporting a family member with one or are interested in how you can support a friend and their family, the Family Pack can help.







ANXIETY DISORDER

**DEPRESSION**

EATING DISORDER

SCHIZOPHRENIA

DRUG & ALCOHOL ADDICTION

BIPOLAR DISORDER

