



«Just in a bad mood or is there more to it?» What parents can do

Is your teenager feeling down and struggling?

All children and adolescents can be anxious, angry, lethargic, or sad at times. These feelings are part of life. When growing up they undergo lots of changes, and switch between high and low feelings. This is because their brain and body are going through a lot of changes too. Distinguishing mood swings from a serious disorder is not always easy.



Parents should keep a close eye on their child to see if symptoms persist for several weeks or months. These kinds of situations can often be stressful for parents. Talking to a professional can help you understand if your child needs support.

Support addresses are listed on the back.

What are the signs of depression?

3–10% of all adolescents suffer from depression. Unlike just feeling down, depression cannot be controlled through willpower alone. Is your child depressed? Here are some warning signs that they might be:

The young person

- ▶ often seems very down and sad
- ▶ has lost enthusiasm and interest in many activities
- ▶ can barely motivate themselves and gets tired quickly
- ▶ shows little self-confidence and often belittles themselves
- ▶ has vague aches and pains
- ▶ suffers from a circadian rhythm disorder

If you note several of these signs concurrently over several weeks, you should seek professional support. If your child loses the will to live anymore or sees life as pointless, you must get help right away.



How parents can help their children

Be there for them

- ▶ Show interest in what your teenager is thinking and feeling.
- ▶ Listen carefully when your child talks about what is worrying them.



Mental illness does not discriminate

There is a fine line between mental health and mental illness. There are many kinds of mental illnesses, and these can affect any family. Every second person suffers from a mental illness at least once in their life. It is not a sign of personal failure – neither on the part of the child nor the parent(s). It is usually the culmination of lots of different stresses. The good news is that a lot of mental illnesses can be treated – with the greatest success if caught at an early stage.

- ▶ Take your teenager's feelings seriously, even if you cannot always understand them. They are allowed to have difficult feelings without adults belittling them.



It helps to talk about it

- ▶ Talking about problems, fears, and insecurities is the first step to improving a stressful situation. Be a role model of this approach for your child.
- ▶ Is something weighing heavily on your child? Find a good moment to talk to your child. Don't give up if it doesn't work out the first time.
- ▶ Keeping worries bottled up does not solve any problems. Help your child understand this.

Set up a support network

- ▶ Help your child maintain relationships with trustworthy people.
- ▶ Keep in touch with your child's teachers. Use parent-teacher evenings to ask how your child is doing at school.
- ▶ Get in touch with people who look after your child and express your concerns if you are worried.
- ▶ Contact a specialist right away if you do not know what else to do.

What you should not do

- ▶ Make them feel like it's their fault
«Pull yourself together»
- ▶ Downplay their worries
«It's not that bad»
- ▶ Give offhand advice
«It's a nice day, go enjoy it»; «Go out and do something with your friends»
- ▶ Try to solve everything yourself
«Don't talk to anybody else about this»; «You can sort it out yourself»

You are not alone

- **Social workers in schools**
www.stadt-zuerich.ch/schulsozialarbeit
- **School psychologists**
www.stadt-zuerich.ch/spd
- **Family counselling from the City of Zurich**
www.stadt-zuerich.ch/familienberatung
- **Emergency number for parents**
Tel. 0848 35 45 55; www.elternnotruf.ch (24 hours)
- **Counselling for parents from Pro Juventute**
Tel. 058 261 61 61; www.projuventute.ch (24 hours)
- **Child and adolescent psychiatry and psychotherapy clinic**
Tel. 058 384 66 66 (24-hour emergency service)
- **Die dargebotene Hand (a «helping hand» association)**
Tel. 143; www.143.ch (24 hours)
- **Crisis Intervention Centre Zurich**
Tel. 044 296 73 10 (24 hours)

