

## Time to take teenage depression seriously

Those who've endured the giddy highs, crashing lows, and excruciating middles that make up adolescence, and crawled out the other side - that's us, by the way - can be a bit hard on poor old teenagers.

Teens routinely find themselves derided and caricatured as floppy, sighing narcissists with a penchant for self-pity and a refusal to leave their bedroom at any time (WiFi permitting). When they're not wallowing in a miasma of their own angst and/or filth, so our accusations go, they're busy plotting the downfall of anyone over 30 with weird new words, alienating clothing trends, and YouTube stars that look younger than most embryos.

In short, society's perceptions of teenagers are, to say the least, a bit harsh.

So when we hear that a teenager might be showing a continuous low mood, feelings of hopelessness, intolerance of others, lack of interest in previously pleasurable things, sensitivity to criticism and sleep abnormalities, the temptation that a lot of us face is to roll our eyes and shrug it all off as typical teen behaviour. But this is precisely why the cultural Kool Aid that we've drunk relating to teenagers is so harmful: the symptoms just mentioned, while perhaps sharing an overlap with some teenage habits, are all signs of an illness that too often goes unnoticed in young people. An illness not taken seriously by society at large, let alone when it appears in the teenage population.

I'm talking, of course, about depression.

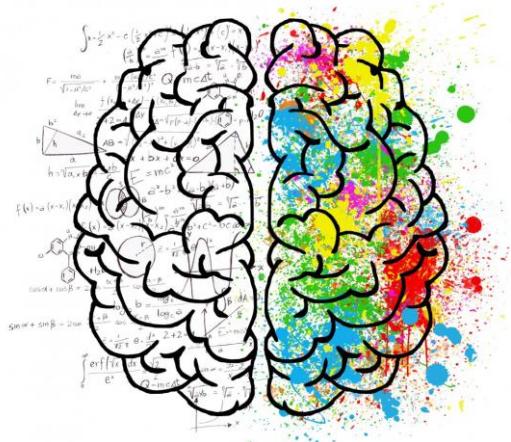
Depression is a mood disorder which is characterised by a persistent low mood, and, because it can be brought on by abuse, bullying or family breakdown, young people can be just as susceptible to the illness as adults. It's estimated that around 20% of adolescents will have experienced depression by the time they reach adulthood, and around 10 - 15% of adolescents are experiencing depression at any one time. Left untreated, depression in teenagers can lead to reckless behaviour, self harm, substance abuse, eating disorders, running away from home and even, in the most extreme cases, suicide.

As with adults, help is at hand: the first step is to speak to a GP, who may then refer the young person to an organisation called CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service). This team of experts will work closely with the young person and their school in order to embed a dedicated programme of support. Depression in teens is also treated with medication, therapy, or both. The most important way to get a teenager on the road to support is to ensure that they

have someone who they like and trust, who they can talk to about what they're going through.

This isn't to say that it will be easy - we all know that adolescence can be a hellscape of its very own even without mental health issues added into the mix - but we can at least give young people and their problems the credence that they deserve, rather than writing off all of their ills as simply a case of Teenage-it. It's by acknowledging and talking about their issues that young people can begin to access the help that they both need and deserve.

And then they can get back to making us all feel old.



### Challenging

1. Name TWO facts about depression from this article.
2. State TWO consequences of untreated depression.
3. Highlight all the connective phrases that are used in this article.
4. Write out two sentences which suggest the writer is concerned about teenagers' mental health.

### More Challenging

1. Describe the steps teens with mental health issues need to take to seek help.
2. Highlight and label THREE stylistic techniques that the writer of this article has used in order to interest the reader.
3. Define the terms 'cultural' and 'substance abuse'. Use each term in a sentence of your own.

### **Mega Challenging**

1. Explain whether you think the writer believes that teenage mental conditions issues are becoming more of an issue than they used to be.
2. Highlight any metaphors and superlatives that you can spot in this text. What is the effect of using these?
3. How formal or informal is this text? How does this help the writer to achieve their purpose? Explain your answer in detail, using evidence to support your points.