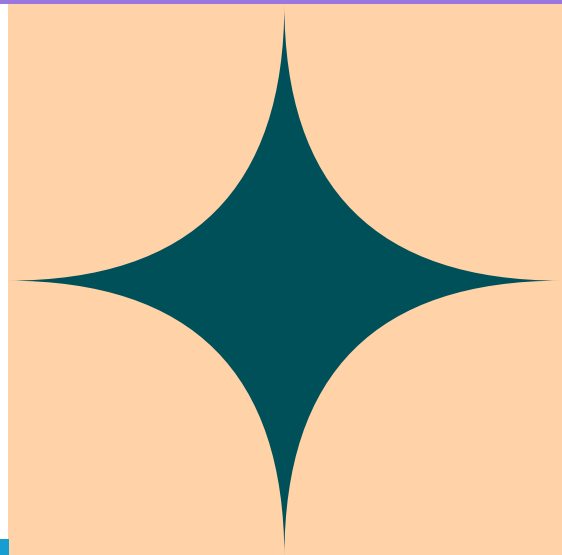


PARENTAL HELP

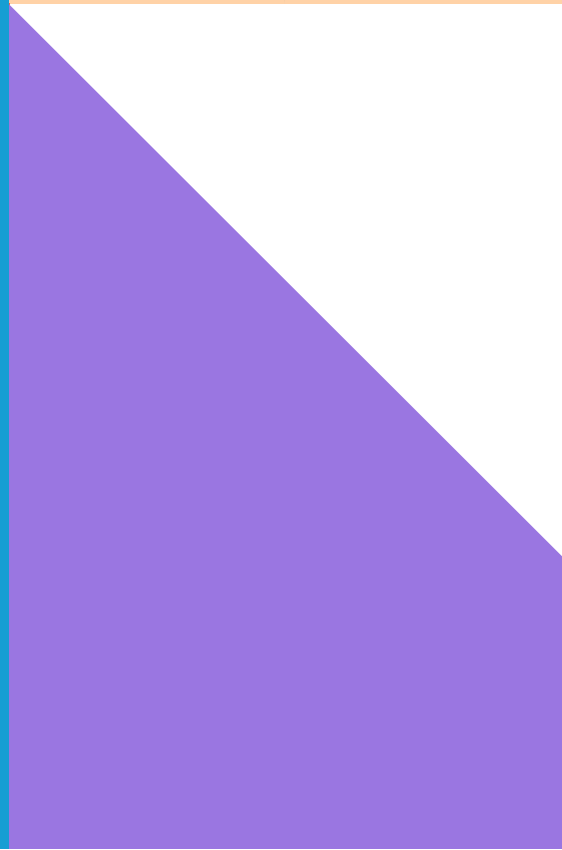
**MANAGING  
CHILDHOOD  
DEPRESSION**



**Youth**



*Inspired*



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**What is childhood depression and what helps?**

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**"I FOUND THAT WITH  
DEPRESSION, ONE OF THE  
MOST IMPORTANT THINGS  
YOU COULD REALIZE IS  
THAT YOU ARE NOT ALONE"**

**DWAYNE JOHNSON**



### **Some of the ways we can see depression in others:**

- **Withdrawal from friends and social activities usually enjoyed.**
- **Feeling irritable or angry**
- **Feeling numb, empty or 'shutting down'**
- **Feeling tearful, lonely, hopeless or despair**
- **Low confidence and critical of self**
- **Sleeping increases or decreases**
- **Eating increased or decreases**
- **Erratic behaviours**
- **Wanting to self harm**
- **Experiencing suicidal thoughts**

# **WHAT IS DEPRESSION?**

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The American Psychological Association defines childhood depression as ' a major depressive episode that occurs in childhood. Defining symptoms may differ from those of major depressive episodes in adults in that irritable mood is more characteristic than depressed mood, and failure to make expected weight gains can often replace an actual weight loss'. As a caregiver it can be useful to know the difference between low mood and feeling depressed as it helps you learn about their experience and access the correct support.

Low mood can be experienced as feeling more sad, tense, angry, tired or worried than usual; Confidence can be knocked but they will feel better after a few days or weeks.

Depression is where this sadness and low feeling doesn't go away when circumstances change and doesn't go away with time. These feelings are overwhelming and begin to affect activities they would usually enjoy and can stop them from moving forward in their lives. This can be a difficult situation to assist without external support.

If your child is experiencing symptoms of depression your first step is to speak to your GP.

# **WHAT HELPS?**

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- **Let them know you are there and wanting to listen.**
- **Try top tips to actively listen to your young person on our website.**
- **Provide emotional support.**
- **If they don't feel ready to speak to you then encourage them to speak to someone else confidentially.**
- **There are some contacts on the last page of this document that may be of use to you and your young person.**

1

## **Routine**

---

Kids thrive when they have a routine. It can reduce stress as they feel 'safer' knowing what is coming next. Begin with a few regular areas such as meal times or bed times. maintain the same time and keep things similar such as where you eat, who gets the cutlery etc, every day. Look at this as an outline for the day and emphasize that routine can leave free time for what your young person enjoys such as playing or relaxing.

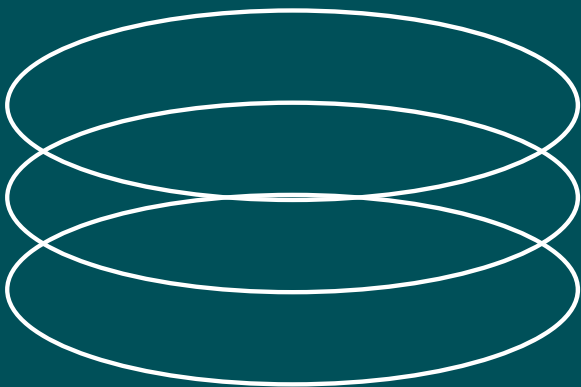
2

## **Enjoyable activities**

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Losing interest in 'the usual' activities when we have depression is very normal. unfortunately this results in less active time, and increased isolation making depression worse.

Make time to schedule in enjoyable activities every day such as playing outside, family board games, cooking together, or being creative. It is important to add that your young person may have their own ideas but as long as they encourage some element of social interaction and movement, they can help.



# **CAREGIVER TIPS**

**ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO QUICK FIX, CAREGIVERS HAVE AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN MAINTAINING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT AND ENCOURAGING HEALTHY HABITS THAT CAN ASSIST IN IMPROVING A CHILD'S MENTAL WELLBEING. TRY THESE AND SEE WHAT WORKS FOR YOU AND YOUR YOUNG PERSON.**

3

## **Socializing**

---

Young people struggling with depression can often lose interest in seeing their friends or socializing. It can be difficult as a parent and we may want them to stay home but this will encourage and reinforce the isolation. Try to schedule social visits, phone calls or online face to face chatting with friends and/or family. Work with your young person to organise activities such as sports or some kind of classes but start small to prevent them feeling too overwhelmed and gradually increase over a period of time.

4

## **Sleep Hygiene**

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another common issue that is associated with depression are changes in our sleep patterns. Trouble falling asleep, poor quality sleep and increased tiredness through the day are difficult and have a knock on effect with our mood. It can be helpful to encourage them to turn off all screen time one hour before bed as this gives our brains time to calm down from the stimulation caused by the screens.

it is also helpful to have a regular bedtime routine that incorporates a relaxing activity and to stick to this at weekends also, maintaining the routine.

5

## A chance to talk

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Just like adults, young people sometimes just need to talk and feel heard. It can be helpful to factor time for this into your routine.

Just check in, ask how they are doing and see if you can what it is like to be them in their world. Avoid judgement and sometimes its not appropriate to give advice unless it is requested. See tips in the active listening resource on our website. Sometimes as caregivers we can find this difficult but do what you can and reach out for therapeutic support if needed.

6

## Relaxation skills

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Due to our own pressures, it is easy for us to forget how much pressure is on our young people between school, homework, peers, family dynamics, chores and expectations from others. We ourselves can also benefit from different stress relieving exercises such as mindfulness, breathing exercises and having some fun. practicing these skills every day can have a real benefit and we as caregivers can encourage this and also model this as we enjoy the benefits ourselves. There are some examples on the next 2 sections.



# CAREGIVER TIPS

**ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO QUICK FIX, CAREGIVERS HAVE AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN MAINTAINING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT AND ENCOURAGING HEALTHY HABITS THAT CAN ASSIST IN IMPROVING A CHILDS MENTAL WELLBEING. TRY THESE AND SEE WHAT WORKS FOR YOU AND YOUR YOUNG PERSON.**

7

## Deep breathing

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During periods of stress, the body triggers a response where you experience an increased heart rate, breathing can be shallow and fast, and your muscles become tense and ready for action. A relaxing response to this is to reduce our breathing rate to allow the symptoms to leave or at least, reduce.

A basic rule for this exercise is to breathe out longer than you breathe in and hold. An example of this is to breathe in for 4, Hold for 4 and Breathe out for 6. Do what is comfortable.

8

## Body scan and muscle relaxation

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This exercise can work well as a distraction and a relaxation techniques. It helps you to notice anxiety through noticing muscle tension and preventing further painful issues along with providing a powerful feeling of relaxation

How to do this is on the next page.

# BODY SCAN MUSCLE RELAXATION TECHNIQUE

## How to do this :

- Begin by sitting comfortably, lower your eyes and do 3 deep breaths
- Think about the top of the head and how that feels, you can tense it and then feel it relax if that helps.
- Down your forehead, cheeks and chin, you can scrunch these if it helps then feel them relax.
- Think about your eye balls, feel them soften and sink into your head
- Move on to your neck and shoulders, you can tense them and/or feel them relax.
- Move to the chest and back; The arms, Imagining the tension flowing down and out of the hands.
- Moving to the chest, the back, your hips, thighs, calves and feet, feeling any tension flowing down and away from the feet.
- Finally you can tense all of the body and release all of your tension and breathe.
- Finally, take a few moments to breathe and when you open your eyes slowly have a gentle stretch and take your time before standing up.

## Tips

Remember to breathe with every part and to go slowly. Imagining with every in breathe you are breathing in relaxation and with every out breath you are breathing out any tension.

If you are tensing try to hold for around 10 seconds then release.



# Caregiver self-care

Caring for someone with depression can be very difficult so don't forget your own needs and reach out for support for yourself if you need it. Youth Interventions are here to listen. Here are some short resources that have been found helpful to others



### Challenge Negative Thoughts

Am I making assumptions?	Is there another way to look at it?
Are there any other possible outcomes?	Is there evidence for this worry?
What advice would I give to a friend?	Is this worry in or out of my control?

### 4-7-8 Relaxing Breath

Press the tip of your tongue to the roof of your mouth and open your mouth slightly.

Close your mouth and inhale through your nose for 4-8 counts (You can work up to 8 counts as your lung capacity increases)

Hold your breath for 7 counts  
Exhale very slowly for 8 counts  
Repeat steps as many times as needed

### Grounding Exercise

- Take a deep breath and name
- 5 things I can SEE
- 4 things I can FEEL
- 3 things I can HEAR
- 2 things I can SMELL
- 1 thing I can TASTE
- Take a deep breath

### Stop & Listen

Spend a few minutes just listening to the sounds around you.

What sounds do you hear? Are they loud or soft?

Pay special attention to interesting sounds you've never noticed before

You can cut these notes out and keep them in your purse or wallet.

# sign posting



**Working with young people and families in Renfrewshire**

**[www.youthinterventions.org.uk](http://www.youthinterventions.org.uk)**

**24/7 telephone/text support**

**TEXT SHOUT to 85258**  
**Call SAMARITINS 116123**  
**Call CHILDLINE 0800 1111**

**IN AN EMERGENCY**  
**CALL 999 OR**  
**GO STRAIGHT TO A&E**

