

Signs and Symptoms of Depression and Anxiety in Adolescence

Depression and anxiety in adolescence are common mental health issues worldwide (Lopez et al., 2006). According to a report by Eurofound (2019), approximately 12% of Irish adolescents reported that they were chronically depressed, while in a separate study by Dooley and colleagues (2019), showed that 22% of Irish adolescents experience symptoms of extreme anxiety.

Depression

Teen depression is often missed or ignored by others and labelled as cases of irritability or changes in mood stemming from puberty (Leaf et al., 1996; Thapar et al., 2012) however it is a serious condition that can have a drastic negative effect of one's development throughout their adolescent years, often leading to further problems such as; self-harm, substance abuse, educational decline, anxiety and suicide. Depression can also negatively affect various aspects of one's life such as, their social life, work life, school life and family life.

Warning signs of depression to look out for include:

1. Feelings of sadness and despair, along with anger and irritability
2. Energy levels often depleted, and feeling of tiredness (lack of motivation and boredom)
3. Sleeping pattern has changed (also changes in eating pattern).
4. Thoughts become difficult to focus (overall difficulty in concentrating).
5. Interests in life such as hobbies, family and one's social life no longer seem enjoyable.
6. View of one's self esteem is low (overall harsh view of oneself)
7. Aches and pains throughout one's body without any apparent cause.
8. Loss of interest in living and frequent thoughts of suicide (instances of self-harm)

Anxiety

Anxiety is a common feeling that everyone experiences at some stage in their life, whether it be anxiety toward sitting an exam or starting a new job. It is a completely natural emotional response that often helps us face certain challenges in life. However, at times one may experience symptoms of anxiety when there is no obvious reason for it. This is what is known as an anxiety disorder. In children and adolescents, this disorder has an average prevalence rate of between 10-15% (Synder et al., 2009).

Signs of anxiety to look out for include:

1. Feelings of restlessness, along with excessive fears and worries (even without any threat being present)
2. Not wanting to interact with others at a social event (or having a feeling of nervousness at the thought of going)
3. A range of physical symptoms such as; stomach pains, headaches, pains in one limbs and back, along with muscle tension. One may also experience; shakiness, sweating, hyperventilation, rapid heartbeat and shortness of breath.
4. Difficulty sleeping, and experience nightmares when sleeping
5. Concentration difficulties

References

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