

Finding Peace in the Storm

Calming the Waves of Adolescent Anxiety and Depression

Presented by: Renae Diener MA, LPC and Corina Helgestad MA, LPC of The Center For Christian Counseling
At Faith Community Church, Fort Atkinson. Feb 2021

All of our brain and body functions and responses serve a purpose.

Emotions are God-created signals that give us information about our beliefs, desires, and needs.

Anxiety and Depression both serve the valuable purpose of telling us that there is a problem that needs our attention.

The root cause of mental and emotional problems may be:

- Psychological (Trauma, Abuse, Family History, Core Beliefs)
- Biological (Hormone Imbalance, Medication, Chemical Exposure)
- Circumstantial (Break-up, School Pressures, Friend Drama)
- Spiritual (Unconfessed Sin, Unforgiveness, Spiritual Oppression)

While the symptoms may look the same, the root cause may be drastically different.

Treatment for a problem must be different depending on what caused it.

A mental-health professional can help you discover the root cause.

Anxiety and Depression are both a part of our fight, flight, or freeze responses to problems and threats.

Anxiety at its core is a fear of an impending doom or the possibility of something bad happening.

Depression at its core is a feeling of hopelessness and a lack of motivation to keep going.

Suicidality can be the extreme form of fleeing.

We must extend grace and compassion for ourselves (if we aren't easily responding in a way that we see others do) and for others (if they don't accomplish things that come easily for us). Differences in responses may be due to body chemistry, neuro development, personality, lifestyle choices, beliefs, and support systems.

Disorders of Depression:

Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder
Persistent Depressive Disorder (Dysthymia)
Substance/Medication-Induced Depressive Disorder
Depressive Disorder Due to Another Medical Condition
Peripartum Depression
Bipolar I Disorder
Other Specified Depressive Disorder
Schizoaffective Disorder

Major Depressive Disorder
Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder
Seasonal Affective Disorder
Adjustment Disorder
Postpartum Depression
Bipolar II Disorder
Unspecified Depressive Disorder

Symptoms of Depression can include:

Feeling sad	Feeling empty	Feeling helpless
Feeling hopeless	Irritability or anger	Loss of interest in activities
Changes in eating habits	Changes in sleeping habits	Restlessness and agitation
Fatigue or loss of energy	Difficulty concentrating	Difficulty making decisions
Lack of motivation	Reckless behavior	Self-harm
Decline in school performance		Withdrawal from friends and family
Feeling excessive or inappropriate guilt		Unexplained aches and pains
Low self-esteem and feelings of worthlessness		Thoughts of death or suicide

Suicide Warning Signs:

- Talking about wanting to die or suicide. Saying things like “I’d be better off dead,” “you would be better off if I wasn’t here,” “I wish I could disappear forever,” “I shouldn’t have been born,” “There’s no way out,” “No one would miss me if I was gone,” “I just want to get this over with and get to Heaven,” “I won’t be a problem for you much longer.”
- Complaining of being a bad person or feeling “rotten inside”
- Making statements about hopelessness, helplessness, worthlessness (“Nothing matters,” “It’s no use,” “I’m beyond help”)
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Talking about death in a positive or romanticizing way (“People will appreciate me when I’m gone”, “The person bullying me will feel sorry after I kill myself”, talking about death as a sweet release)
- Writing or drawing about death, dying or suicide
- Engaging in reckless behavior - not caring if they’re risking death
- Giving away prized possessions
- Saying goodbye as if for the last time
- Seeking out ways to harm or kill oneself (weapons, pills, online searches about suicide)
- Becoming suddenly cheerful after a period of depression (this may mean they have already made the decision to end their life)

Disconnections that can cause Depression:

1. Disconnection from meaningful work
2. Disconnection from other people
3. Disconnection from meaningful values
4. Disconnection because of trauma
5. Disconnection from status and respect
6. Disconnection from nature
7. Disconnection from a secure future

Anxiety Disorders:

Generalized Anxiety Disorder
Social Anxiety
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
Hoarding
Selective Mutism
Trichotillomania (hair pulling)
Adjustment Disorder
Panic Disorder
Substance-induced anxiety disorder
Anxiety in pregnancy antepartum (before childbirth)
Hypochondria (unwarranted fear about health)
Conversion Disorders (non-medically explained neurological symptoms)
Somatoform Disorders (non-medically explained bodily symptoms)
Body Dysmorphia (anxiety about perceived bodily flaws)

Mixed Anxiety Disorder
Separation Anxiety
Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
Tic Disorders
Tourette's syndrome
Excoriation (skin-picking) disorder
Phobias
Dissociative Disorders
Postpartum anxiety (after childbirth)

Symptoms of Anxiety can include...

Panic
Excessive worry, cycling thoughts
Intrusive thoughts or images
Perfectionism
Mind going blank
Eating more or less than normal
Suicidal thoughts
Trouble functioning at work or school
Feeling detached from oneself or reality
Skin picking
Feeling weak or tired
Nightmares
Dizziness, light-headedness, feeling faint
Trembling, shaking, and muscle spasms
Numbness, tingling sensations
Tightness in chest, chest pain
Restlessness
Headaches
Rapid irregular heartbeat, fluttering or pounding
Shortness of breath, rapid breathing, hyperventilation

Excessive Fear
Sense of impending danger, panic or doom
Anger, irritability
Trouble concentrating
Avoidance
Social isolation
Refusing to talk
Strong desire to get away
Hair plucking
Cutting, self-injury
Trouble sleeping
Gastrointestinal (GI) problems
Shoulder, back pain
Muscle tension
Sensation of choking
Sweating
Feeling hot or cold
Stomach aches

Part of our brain is responsible for alerting us of danger.

The parts of our brains that get exercised get stronger and faster. So, if the fear center in our brain gets used a lot (due to circumstances, biology, beliefs, or behaviors), it gets stronger and stronger – eventually becoming unhelpful.

The stress hormones of adrenaline and cortisol help shut down body processes that aren't necessary for survival (like digestion and logging memories) and beef up body processes that will help to fight or flee (like increase heart rate, blood flow, and prime our muscles to move).

Our bodies respond the same to anything that feels threatening and this is not super helpful when there's nothing to fight and nowhere to run.

It is very important to develop good coping skills and work to solve the underlying root causes of our stress and anxiety, in order to keep our bodies as healthy as possible.

12 Myths About Teen Depression and Anxiety

1. Myth: All teens are irritable or moody so what I'm seeing is normal

Yes, adolescence is a time of hormonal changes, and the stress of transitioning from childhood to adulthood, and asserting independence, which can result in more arguments with parents. In assessing teens for depression and anxiety we gather more information about associated symptoms to determine if they are experiencing a mental health disorder or if it's developmentally appropriate. A psychological testing evaluation can also help answer this question.

2. Myth: They don't have a mental illness, they're just lazy and need to try harder

Depression and anxiety can affect sleep, energy level, and motivation making even the smallest task feel overwhelming and insurmountable. Teens with depression and anxiety aren't lazy, they're expending a tremendous amount of effort and energy to accomplish what teens without these challenges can do easily, all while continuously fighting an onslaught of negative or fearful thoughts running through their mind.

3. Myth: Mental health issues are a personal weakness

People who wake up every day to battle with depression or anxiety might be some of the strongest people you know. Also, we need to consider God's perspective on weakness ("my power is made perfect in weakness." 2 Corinthians 12:9). Having an area of difficulty is an opportunity for God's power to show up, and our relationship with Him strengthen, as we rely on His power rather than our own.

4. Myth: If someone went through a similar situation as me and they seem fine, that means something is wrong with me if I'm not fine.

They might look fine and not be. They could be stuffing their emotions that'll come up later. Maybe they have different coping strategies, support systems, or body chemistry than yours. We're all unique individuals so that really wouldn't be a fair comparison.

5. Myth: Talking about depression or anxiety with my teen will just make it worse. Discussing suicide will give them ideas.

Talking about it with teens can give them a sense of relief and a feeling of being understood. Communication is key to knowing your teen's thoughts and feelings. Parents still have a significant influence during adolescence.

6. Myth: You can improve a depressed teen's behavior by enforcing consequences. If I punish them for (ex. cutting), they'll stop and get better.

Punishments and taking away privileges for depressed teens are likely just going to fuel their despair. Keep in mind if your teen could do better, he or she would. Think about what skill your teen might be in need of strengthening and help them build that skill

7. Myth: If your teen refuses help, there's nothing you can do.

If your teen won't go to the therapy appointment you set up for them, you can keep the appointment and talk to the therapist in their place about how you can parent them. And don't give up. Keep trying. You can bring in other supports too – at school, church, close relatives and the teen's friends. You can spend quality time with your teen, plan activities together, and be a good listener. You can keep routines at home that are positively predictable and encourage healthy habits.

8. Myth: Teens with depression or anxiety are acting that way for attention so we should ignore it.

Most people don't fake illnesses. If they are struggling with their mental health it's adaptive to seek attention to get the help they need. Also, I'd reframe attention-seeking as connection-seeking.

9. Myth: If you have an anxiety disorder, you should avoid stress and situations that make you feel anxious.

Avoiding anxiety makes it stronger. Well-meaning friends and family can keep you from facing your fears, when it is far more helpful to compassionately encourage facing and moving through the anxiety.

10. Myth: Panic attacks are physically dangerous/harmful.

You might experience tightness in your chest and/or a rapid heartbeat during a panic attack but it's not like a heart attack. It's unlikely you'll pass out, which happens when there is a sudden drop in blood pressure. During a panic attack blood pressure rises slightly. Your body is safe and you're already experiencing the worst of it.

11. Myth: If you eat right and exercise your anxiety/depression will go away.

These are essential components to wellbeing and will likely be helpful in managing and even decreasing anxiety and depression, but they won't be sufficient because they don't address the root cause.

12. Myth: You can't/shouldn't be depressed or anxious if you have a good life or if you're a Christian.

Depression and anxiety can affect anyone, and it doesn't make you any less grateful for the wonderful things about your life. It doesn't mean that you don't have faith, don't pray enough, or are a bad Christian. There may be a number of reasons why the depression or anxiety is there and it's important to find the reason and address it.

When to tell someone that you're struggling

Feeling a little depressed or a little anxious can be a normal part of life – if it's not too frequent, not too intense, and not negatively affecting your life.

If what you're trying on your own isn't working, and it's on your mind a lot, if it's causing problems in your relationships with friends or family members, if the day-to-day stuff seems really hard, or if it's staying the same or getting worse, then it's the right time to seek help from a trusted adult.

You should try healthy coping strategies, but don't be afraid to ask for help before too long. Prevention and early detection are your best friends.

How do I know when to seek professional help for my child?

If you notice a change in their behavior, mood, or level of functioning in any area that lasts for more than two weeks. If they say they need help, or if someone else close to them tells you they need help.

It's imperative to continue to check in with them on how they're doing. If the symptoms return, or the previous level of functioning never returns, then you should seek help.

Parents often wonder if what they are seeing is "normal" teen behavior or if it is a more serious concern. This is exactly the type of thing that a therapist can help you determine.

If what you are doing is not working, and the situation continues for more than two weeks or worsens quickly, it's time to seek professional help. Mental health concerns – just like physical illnesses – are easier to treat when caught early. Don't be afraid to get help.

Coping Skill (Strategy, Mechanism) Definition:

Techniques you can use to help you handle difficult emotions, meet a need, solve a problem, avoid discomfort, or feel in control.

Unhealthy Coping: A person's attempt to meet a need, solve a problem, avoid discomfort, or feel in control, but end up causing more problems.

Examples:

Substance use	Self-harm	Isolation
Avoidance	Eating disorders	Overspending
Sleeping too much	Thoughts of suicide	

We shouldn't just demand that a person stops their unhealthy coping mechanism without understanding why it's there and helping them replace it with a healthier alternative.

Healthy Coping:

Prevention - Focuses on regular routines that keep us in a healthy place.

Examples:

Getting adequate sleep	Balanced nutrition	Daily devotions
Regular exercise	Limiting social media intake	
Healthy balance of alone time and social time		Limiting sugar and caffeine intake

Problem-based - Focuses on solving a problem that is causing stress and difficult emotions.

Examples:

Ending an unhealthy relationship	Changing jobs
Changing negative thought patterns	Reducing the amount of commitments you have

Emotion-Based - Focuses on navigating through difficult emotions when they arise.

Examples:

Deep breathing	Mindfulness	Grounding
Exercise	Talk to someone	Pray
Cry	Meditating on scripture	Listening to music

*Refer to Coping Skills handout for many more

Scientists Have Identified 7 Causes of Depression But the Bible Got There First

By Jenny Burns

I have dedicated most of my working life to helping those who are sad or anxious. I have worked in primary care, the third sector and in research with all ages and stages. Now in middle-age, with more time to think, but probably less time to live, I am keen to learn more and help more with the pervading sadness and disappointment I see around me.

Mental ill health is certainly a hot topic. It is horrible for those experiencing it and costs the government millions. The race is on to find 'cures', and with the popularity of publications such as 12 Rules for Life or The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, many seem to be offering their answers.

I recently read a book by Johann Hari called Lost Connections (Bloomsbury) published this year and already hailed as a Sunday Times and New York Times bestseller. He claims to have uncovered new ways to think about mental ill health without the prolific use of medication as plasters over wounds.

I salute his writings and in fact agree with many of his points, but as I read the book, I felt it expressed wisdom that has already been written down many thousands of years ago.

Here I want to map out what Hari has stated as some of the causes or “disconnections” for depression/anxiety and what the Bible has to say on these themes.

1. Disconnection from meaningful work

Hari states that often mental ill health could be a result of a lack of empowerment and lack of control felt by those in work. He also discovered that increased effort does not always mean increased rewards. In short, a lack of meaningful and purposeful work could be why some are depressed and anxious and yes, they have a job, and they are grateful, but it lacks meaning. Over time this is making them ill.

The Bible talks about how God gave man work. In Genesis, God empowered Adam and gave him control over the world he had created. He asked him to name the animals. God didn't name them. Adam did. He spotted Adam's need for a “helper” and gave him a woman. There was purpose, meaning, order and reward in the work that the first humans were set to do. God planned for us to be connected with our work in a meaningful way. This is part of our design. Without it, we could become unwell.

2. Disconnection from other people

Hari demonstrates through research, that we are not supposed to live life as an island. We are 'tribal' in nature and have need for belonging; the more we retreat the worse our mental health can often get. He also points out that the social connections we need must include mutual aid and protection; Facebook friendship is not enough to keep us connected.

God chose a people, the Israelites, for whom he established a way of living in communion with each other and himself as a testimony to the rest of the world. He gave guidelines for families, celebrations, community and worship. He also said that “it is not good for man to be alone” and brought Eve to be with Adam so they could become “one”. The letter to the Hebrews (10:25) talks about “not giving up meeting together”. The Christian church is described in 1 Corinthians as “the body of Christ”, in which each of us plays a part. To be in relationship is part of God's design and is a way of protecting us from isolation.

3. Disconnection from meaningful values

Hari defines the Western world now as having “junk values” which are causing us to be constantly disappointed. Research says we have values that seek after materialism: the next car, the cruise, the bigger house etc. He also says that we have become attuned to extrinsic rewards and trophies when

intrinsic rewards are more satisfying, long term. He says that we have “innate needs to feel connected, to feel valued, to feel secure, to feel we make a difference in the world, to have autonomy, to feel we are good at something”. Our true plumb line is missing and when we get more 'stuff' or achieve more accolades we can't understand why we are not satisfied.

Jesus agrees and talks about a different set of values. In Matthew 5, he describes how we are happy when we are humble, gentle, and when we hunger for rightness in the world, have mercy for others, are pure in heart and are peacemakers. These values contain some of the innate ones Hari is talking about. Also, the writer to the church of Philippi said: “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things” (Philippians 4:8) Jesus never gave any junk values to emulate and he refuted extrinsic rewards: “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.” (Matthew 6:2).

4. Disconnection because of trauma

The research that Hari puts forward is a hot topic in many current public health agendas. He states that “depression is a normal response to abnormal life experiences” and “when people have these kind of problems (childhood abuse etc.) it is time to stop asking what's wrong with them...and time to start asking what happened to them”. Being sad because of trauma is normal. Being anxious because of maltreatment is normal. We need to start doing something about it.

Paul says that there is no denying that we will experience troubles in this life, many of them unjust, which will make us feel sad. But, he says, “the Spirit helps us in our weakness” (Romans 8:26) and his grace is sufficient for us for his power is made perfect in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). God is aware that all that happens to us can be turned from traumas into strengths.

Today we would probably call this resilience. In fact, Romans 5:3-4 says: “...suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope”. Finally, God weaves together all that we experience for good (Romans 8:28). Is God sad that we are maltreated? Jesus wept when his friend Lazarus died and we are made in his image. We are sad. God is sad too, but he uses it for good and builds character in us.

5. Disconnection from status and respect

Here Hari describes how society is unequal and misuses power and hierarchies. He suggests that the more unequal society is, the more mental health problems we will have. He says: “...it creates defeat we can't escape from”. The very poor often feel defeated.

God recognizes this too. There are many references in the Bible to the “oppressed” and “the poor”. So much so that scripture asks us to be just and stand up for righteousness. The prophet Isaiah commands the Israelites to “...loosen the chains of injustice and untie the cords of those burdened, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke” (Isaiah 58:6-7). The job of believers is to make society more equal.

6. Disconnection from nature

Hari describes how we walk with our heads down in our own manufactured world. We wonder why we are depressed and anxious when we have forgotten the bigger natural world we are a part of. Hari endorses the research that shows we can gain perspective from nature. He says we have an innate need to notice that we are part of something bigger. He says when we look out onto a beautiful view, it is difficult to not be in awe.

The Bible has many references about nature and how it can be awe-inspiring, giving us perspective, connection and helping us feel we are part of something bigger: “For since the creation of the world,

God's invisible qualities (His eternal power and divine nature) have been clearly seen being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse" (Romans 1:20).

7. Disconnection from a secure future

Hari describes this disconnect as people with a sense of hopelessness about the future; a sense of nothing to look forward to, often as a result of "junk values" and being disconnected from others. This sense of no horizon or nothing to look forward to, contributes to anxiety and depression.

God foreknew we would have times of hopelessness. Paul wrote in his letters to the Hebrews: "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (6:19). An anchor holds fast for a boat against tides, winds and waves. Paul used this metaphor to illustrate how a faith in God can give us the resilience to withstand these times when the horizon is out of sight. He also alludes to the life after death and the hope that our "soul" is anchored to a God who has a heaven waiting for us. Jesus said: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him will not die, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Now, that is hope for a hopeless world, something to hang onto during the storms.

Brain changes

Hari states that our culture is broken, our standards incorrect and some of these experiences shape our brains and that can lead to mental ill health. But the hopeful part is that because of the brain's neuroplasticity (its ability to be molded at any time of life), new experiences can re-wire our brains over time. The research states our genes can play a part in inheriting mental ill health, however this only accounts for 30-40 percent of occurrences and this ill health will only manifest itself if the right environment is present.

God laid out different standards for the world. "Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105). These are ancient truths in the Bible; found in both the Old and New Testament. God knows humankind so well and has given us a plumb line and values to look to, in order to have lives that stand tall and straight. He has also given us a hope for today and tomorrow through his son Jesus Christ, which is countercultural. And so the author of Ecclesiastes was right: it has all been said before, there is nothing new under the sun.

Jenny Burns lives in Wales, is a mental health practitioner (OT), a minister's wife, a PhD student, author, a charity lead, proud mum to three grown sons and a daughter in law.

Suicide: What to do When Someone is Suicidal

By Mayo Clinic Staff

When someone you know appears suicidal, you might not know what to do. Learn warning signs, what questions to ask and how to get help.

When someone says he or she is thinking about suicide, or says things that sound as if the person is considering suicide, it can be very upsetting. You may not be sure what to do to help, whether you should take talk of suicide seriously, or if your intervention might make the situation worse. Taking action is always the best choice. Here's what to do.

Start by asking questions

The first step is to find out whether the person is in danger of acting on suicidal feelings. Be sensitive, but ask direct questions, such as:

- How are you coping with what's been happening in your life?
- Do you ever feel like just giving up?
- Are you thinking about dying?
- Are you thinking about hurting yourself?
- Are you thinking about suicide?
- Have you ever thought about suicide before, or tried to harm yourself before?
- Have you thought about how or when you'd do it?
- Do you have access to weapons or things that can be used as weapons to harm yourself?

Asking about suicidal thoughts or feelings won't push someone into doing something self-destructive. In fact, offering an opportunity to talk about feelings may reduce the risk of acting on suicidal feelings.

Look for warning signs

You can't always tell when a loved one or friend is considering suicide. But here are some common signs:

- Talking about suicide — for example, making statements such as "I'm going to kill myself," "I wish I were dead" or "I wish I hadn't been born"
- Getting the means to take your own life, such as buying a gun or stockpiling pills
- Withdrawing from social contact and wanting to be left alone
- Having mood swings, such as being emotionally high one day and deeply discouraged the next
- Being preoccupied with death, dying or violence
- Feeling trapped or hopeless about a situation
- Increasing use of alcohol or drugs
- Changing normal routine, including eating or sleeping patterns
- Doing risky or self-destructive things, such as using drugs or driving recklessly
- Giving away belongings or getting affairs in order when there is no other logical explanation for doing this
- Saying goodbye to people as if they won't be seen again
- Developing personality changes or being severely anxious or agitated, particularly when experiencing some of the warning signs listed above

For immediate help

If someone has attempted suicide:

- Don't leave the person alone.
- Call 911 or your local emergency number right away. Or, if you think you can do so safely, take the person to the nearest hospital emergency room yourself.
- Try to find out if he or she is under the influence of alcohol or drugs or may have taken an overdose.

- Tell a family member or friend right away what's going on.
- If a friend or loved one talks or behaves in a way that makes you believe he or she might attempt suicide, don't try to handle the situation alone:

Get help from a trained professional as quickly as possible.

The person may need to be hospitalized until the suicidal crisis has passed.

Encourage the person to call a suicide hotline number. In the U.S., call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (800-273-8255) to reach a trained counselor. Use that same number and press "1" to reach the Veterans Crisis Line.

Offer to help the person take steps to get assistance and support.

You can research treatment options, make phone calls and review insurance benefit information, or even offer to go with the person to an appointment.

Encourage the person to communicate with you.

Someone who's suicidal may be tempted to bottle up feelings because he or she feels ashamed, guilty or embarrassed. Be supportive and understanding, and express your opinions without placing blame. Listen attentively and avoid interrupting.

Be respectful and acknowledge the person's feelings. Don't try to talk the person out of his or her feelings or express shock. Remember, even though someone who's suicidal isn't thinking logically, the emotions are real. Not respecting how the person feels can shut down communication.

Don't be patronizing or judgmental.

For example, don't tell someone, "Things could be worse" or "You have everything to live for." Instead, ask questions such as, "What's causing you to feel so bad?" "What would make you feel better?" or "How can I help?"

Offer reassurance that things can get better.

When someone is suicidal, it seems as if nothing will make things better. Reassure the person that with appropriate treatment, he or she can develop other ways to cope and can feel better about life again.

Encourage the person to avoid alcohol and drug use.

Using drugs or alcohol may seem to ease the painful feelings, but ultimately it makes things worse — it can lead to reckless behavior or feeling more depressed. If the person can't quit on his or her own, offer to help find treatment.

Remove potentially dangerous items from the person's home, if possible.

If you can, make sure the person doesn't have items around that could be used for suicide — such as knives, razors, guns or drugs. If the person takes a medication that could be used for overdose, encourage him or her to have someone safeguard it and give it as prescribed.

Take all signs of suicidal behavior seriously.

If someone says he or she is thinking of suicide or behaves in a way that makes you think the person may be suicidal, don't play it down or ignore the situation. Many people who kill themselves have expressed the intention at some point. ***You may worry that you're overreacting, but the safety of your friend or loved one is most important. Don't worry about straining your relationship when someone's life is at stake.***

You're not responsible for preventing someone from taking his or her own life — but your intervention may help the person see that other options are available to stay safe and get treatment.

Teenagers: When someone you know is suicidal

If you're a teenager who's concerned that a friend or classmate may be considering suicide, take action. Ask the person directly about his or her feelings, even though it may be awkward. Listen to what the person has to say, and take it seriously. Just talking to someone who really cares can make a big difference.

If you've talked to the person and you're still concerned, share your concerns with a teacher, guidance counselor, someone at church, someone at a local youth center or another responsible adult.

Never promise to keep someone's suicidal feelings a secret.

Be understanding, but explain that you may not be able to keep such a promise if you think the person's life is in danger. At that point, you have to get help.

It may be hard to tell whether a friend or classmate is suicidal, and you may be afraid of taking action and being wrong. If someone's behavior or talk makes you think he or she might be suicidal, the person may be struggling with some major issues, even if not considering suicide at the moment. You can help the person get to the right resources.

Offer support

If a friend or loved one is thinking about suicide, he or she needs professional help, even if suicide isn't an immediate danger. Here's what you can do.

Encourage the person to call a suicide hotline number.

In the U.S., call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (800-273-8255) to reach a trained counselor.

Encourage the person to seek treatment.

A suicidal or severely depressed person may not have the energy or motivation to find help. If the person doesn't want to consult a doctor or mental health provider, suggest finding help from a support group, crisis center, faith community, teacher or other trusted person.

You can offer support and advice — but remember that it's not your job to substitute for a mental health provider.

Toxic Positivity

vs.

Validation and Hope

You'll get over it.

Just be positive.

Good vibes only!

Stop being so negative.

Think happy thoughts.

Never give up!

Happiness is a choice.

I'm sure it's not as bad as it seems.

Don't cry. You're going to make me cry.

Don't worry. It'll all turn out.

Other people have it worse.

You shouldn't feel ____.

Don't worry, be happy.

Every cloud has a silver lining.

Everything happens for a reason.

I know exactly how you feel.

It is what it is.

This is hard. You've done hard things before.

Yes, things could go wrong. What could go right?

It's okay to feel what you're feeling. It will eventually get easier.

It's normal to struggle in a situation like this

I can understand how it's hard to be positive right now.

Sometimes we need to stop doing something if it's not good for us to continue. Do what's best for you.

It's never fun to feel like that. Is there something you can do right now that you enjoy?

I'm sorry this is happening. I believe you can get through it.

It's okay to cry. Do you want to tell me how this is affecting you?

Is there anything I can do to help?

Just because someone else has it worse, doesn't mean that your pain isn't real or valid.

Your emotions can't be switched on and off. Take your time to process through what you're feeling.

It's okay to be scared. You have what it takes to get through this.

It's probably hard to see any good in this situation. I'm sure you'll be able to make sense of it someday.

It's okay to feel whatever you need to feel. Sometimes things are hard and confusing. I'm here for you.

Would you tell me how you feel? I want to understand your experience.

This is tough. How can I support you?

Positive Things to Say to Your Child

I'm grateful for you.

Your voice matters.

I love being your parent.

You don't have to be perfect to be great.

I love you.

I believe in you.

This family wouldn't be the same without you.

You can say yes.

I'm impressed with the effort you put into that.

You are helpful.

I love your creativity.

I can't wait to hear about it.

You're making a difference.

You are interesting.

I love seeing the world through your eyes.

What you did was awesome.

That's a great question.

I trust you.

I learn new things from you.

Thank you for being you.

You look great.

I want to understand / Help me understand.

Watching you grow up is the best.

I appreciate you.

You are very good at that!

I love how you said that.

Not everyone will like you, and that's OK.

You are beautiful inside and out.

You are more than enough.

I'm proud of you.

You have great ideas.

Your opinions matter.

You are important.

I believe you.

You are valuable.

You can say no.

You were right.

We can try your way.

You are worthy.

Being around you is fun.

Don't be afraid to be you.

I'm excited to spend time with you.

It's good to be curious.

I love the way you tell stories.

I admire you.

Your friends are lucky to have you.

That was a really good choice.

You are a good person.

I'm so glad you're here.

That was really brave.

I forgive you.

I'm sorry. Will you forgive me?

We all make mistakes.

You can try again tomorrow.

I'm listening.

That's a very fair point.

I could never stop loving you.

You make my heart full.

Questions to Spark Conversation with Your Teen

1. Is there anything you want to tell me that might be hard to say?
2. What are you struggling with today?
3. What are you thankful for today?
4. What happened today that made you smile or laugh?
5. What would you like to do with me today?
6. What are the different cliques or social groups in your school and which one, if any, are you in?
7. Is there a celebrity you look up to? If so, why?
8. What is the coolest app that I don't have on my phone?
9. What is the most embarrassing thing that I do?
10. Who do you eat lunch with at school?
11. How would you describe my parenting style?
12. What bands are you listening to these days? Can you play me one of their best songs?
13. Who would you say is your best friend right now?
14. Where would be an awesome place to go for a family vacation?
15. What do you think of the President?
16. Did I ever tell you about how I met your (mother, father)?
17. Who is your favorite and least favorite teacher this year? Why?
18. Which shows are you watching right now? Why do you like them?
19. What emotion do you feel most often?
20. Is there anything you would like to learn how to do?
21. Have there been any books that you had to read this year that you really liked?
22. How would you describe your personality?
23. How would you describe my personality (or the other parent)?
24. Is bullying a problem at your school?
25. Is drug and alcohol use a big thing at your school?
26. What is the one thing you don't know about me that you want to know?
27. What are some of the first things that you remember?
28. Which holidays do you really like and why?
29. What look are you going for when you get dressed?
30. How long do you want to live?
31. What would you say were the most important moments of your life so far?
32. What would you wish I might do differently as a parent?
33. Have you ever been mad at God? If so, why?
34. What would you say are your all-time favorite movies so far?
35. What do you wish you were more motivated to do?
36. Are there any quotes from movies, songs, or books that you've heard and really like?
37. Are there parts of your body that you really like or dislike?
38. What were the most memorable family trips we've taken so far?
39. What do you do and think when you see a homeless person?
40. Do you know anyone who you would say has an ideal marriage or relationship?

41. What was the best and worst thing that happened to you today / this week?
42. Do you ever feel jealous about the family of any of your friends?
43. Do you think we treat you and your siblings fairly?
44. Do you think millennials are really that different from other generations?
45. What are the best and worst things about having a smartphone?
46. What do you like to watch on YouTube?
47. Do you think you want to get married one day?
48. How many kids, if any, do you think you might want some day?
49. What kind of a parent do you think you will be?
50. What about becoming an adult are you most looking forward to?
51. How are you feeling right now?
52. Do you think adults praise kids too much or not enough?
53. Do the school shootings in the news make you feel unsafe at school?
54. What's the one thing adults don't get about teenagers?
55. Does anyone have a crush on you right now? Do you have a crush on anyone right now?
56. Do you have any enemies?
57. What would you do with a million dollars?
58. Do you think teens have it easier or tougher compared to my generation?
59. Where's the first place you would want to go after getting your driver's license?
60. Do you agree with the current legal age for drinking, smoking, and voting?
61. If two people like each other romantically, do you think someone still should ask before trying to kiss the other person?
62. What are your thoughts on having sex before marriage?
63. What do you think has been the hardest thing you have ever done?
64. What is the best (non-profanity) comeback to say to a bully?
65. Do you wish we had pushed you harder or less hard to keep doing _____?
66. Are you satisfied with the number of friends that you have and quality of those friendships?
67. Do you think marijuana should be legal for people after a certain age?
68. What could I do to help you feel more supported?
69. What are the big things being talked about at school right now?
70. What were some of the best holiday or birthday presents you ever received?
71. What's a fun thing that we could plan to do together?
72. Do you want to travel overseas? Why/why not? If so, where?
73. What careers are you considering pursuing after high school?
74. What characteristics do you value in a friend?
75. What is something that scares you?
76. If you could change one thing that's happened in your life, what would it be?
77. What's the happiest you've ever been?
78. What's something you've done that you're proud of?
79. What do you wish more people knew about you?
80. When do you feel really good about yourself?

Many of the above questions were gathered from David Rettew M.D. of Psychology Today

Coping Skills

Coping skills help us get through difficult times - they can give us an important break from mental and emotional distress, and sometimes they are literally life-saving.

Keep this list of coping skills handy for when you need it... folded up in your wallet or bag or post it up on the wall somewhere handy at home.



Make this list work for you

Use a highlighter pen to mark the skills that work best for you & add your own ideas over the page.

<p>Distraction</p> <p>Absorb your mind in something else</p>	<p>Conversation, listen to talk radio, read, do puzzles, TV, computer games, jigsaws, solve a problem, make a list, learn something new, cleaning & tidying, gardening, arts & crafts.</p>	<p>Pros</p> <p>Gives your heart & mind a break.</p> <p>Great for short term relief.</p> <p>Great to get through a crisis.</p>	<p>Cons</p> <p>Can't do it for too long. Doesn't resolve any underlying issues. Meds can make it hard to concentrate.</p>
<p>Grounding</p> <p>Get out of your head & into your body & the world</p>	<p>Use body & senses: smell fragrances, slowly taste food, notice the colours around you. Walk on the grass barefoot, squeeze clay or mud, do yoga, meditate, exercise.</p>	<p>Pros</p> <p>Helps slow or stop 'dissociation' (feeling numb, floaty or disconnected).</p> <p>Reduces physicality of anxiety.</p>	<p>Cons</p> <p>Sometimes it's better to stay a bit dissociated (that's how your mind protects you).</p>
<p>Emotional Release</p> <p>Let it out!</p>	<p>Yell, scream, run! Try a cold shower. Let yourself cry... and sob. Put on a funny DVD and let yourself laugh! Try boxing, popping balloons, or crank up some music & dance crazy!</p>	<p>Pros</p> <p>Great for anger and fear.</p> <p>Releases the pressure of overwhelming emotion.</p>	<p>Cons</p> <p>Hard to do in every situation. Feels odd. Some people might think you're acting 'crazier' (be selective with how & where you do this)</p>
<p>Self Love</p>	<p>Massage hands with nice cream, manicure your nails, cook a special meal, clean your house (or just make your bed), bubble bath or long shower, brush hair, buy a small treat.</p>	<p>Pros</p> <p>Become your own best friend, your own support worker.</p> <p>Great for guilt or shame.</p> <p>You deserve it!</p>	<p>Cons</p> <p>Sometimes can feel really hard to do, or feel superficial (but it's not).</p>
<p>Thought challenge</p>	<p>Write down negative thoughts then list all the reasons they may not be true. Imagine someone you love had these thoughts - what advice would you give them?</p>	<p>Pros</p> <p>Can help to shift long-term, negative thinking habits.</p> <p>Trying to be more logical can help reduce extreme emotion.</p>	<p>Cons</p> <p>The more emotional you feel, the harder this is to do. In particular, feelings of shame can make this very hard.</p>
<p>Access your higher self</p>	<p>Help someone else, smile at strangers (see how many smiles you get back), pray, volunteer, do randomly kind things for others, pat dogs at the local park, join a cause</p>	<p>Pros</p> <p>Reminds us that everyone has value and that purpose can be found in small as well as large things.</p>	<p>Cons</p> <p>Don't get stuck trying to save everyone else and forget about you!</p>

Find out more online at www.indigodaya.com

Your Personal Coping Skills List

Use this page to write your own list of coping skills. You might take some from my list, some that you already know, and others may still be out there for you to discover...



Distraction
Absorb your mind in something else

Grounding
Get out of your head & into your body

Emotional Release
Let it out!

Self Love

Thought challenge

Access your higher self

Remember... Coping skills are a start, but not the end. Being able to cope with distress can be life-saving, but eventually you need to do the work to heal from the causes of distress.

Find out more online at www.indigodaya.com

@ Indigo Day, 2013. Please feel free to share this flyer with anyone who may benefit from it. If shared online, I appreciate a link back to my website. Not for commercial use.