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## The Link Between Depression and Suicide

The majority of suicide attempts and suicide deaths happen among teens with depression. Consider these statistics about teen suicide and teen depression: about 1% of all teens attempt suicide and about 1% of those suicide attempts results in death (that means about 1 in 10,000 teens dies from suicide). But for adolescents who have depressive illnesses, the rates of suicidal thinking and behavior are much higher. Most teens who have depression think about suicide, and between 15% and 30% of teens with serious depression who think about suicide go on to make a suicide attempt.

Keep in mind that most of the time for most teens depression is a passing mood. The sadness, loneliness, grief, and disappointment we all feel at times are normal reactions to some of the struggles of life. With the right support, some resilience, an inner belief that there will be a brighter day, and decent coping skills, most teens can get through the depressed mood that happens occasionally when life throws them a curve ball.

But sometimes depression doesn't lift after a few hours or a few days. Instead it lasts, and it can seem too heavy to bear. When someone has a depressed or sad mood that is intense and lingers almost all day, almost every day for 2 weeks or more, it may be a sign that the person has developed **major depression**. Major depression, sometimes called clinical depression, is beyond a passing depressed mood - it is the term mental health professionals use for depression that has become an illness in need of treatment. Another form of serious depression is called **bipolar disorder**, which includes extreme low moods (major depression) as well as extreme high moods (these are called manic episodes).

Though children can experience depression, too, teens are much more vulnerable to major depression and bipolar illness. Hormones and sleep cycles, which both change dramatically during adolescence, have an effect on mood and may partly explain why teens (especially girls) are particularly prone to depression. Believe it or not, as many as 20% of all teens have had depression that's this severe at some point. The good news is that depression is

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treatable - most teens get better with the right help.

It's not hard to see why serious depression and suicide are connected. Serious depression (with both major depression and bipolar illness) involves a long-lasting sad mood that doesn't let up, and a loss of pleasure in things you once enjoyed. It also involves thoughts about death, negative thoughts about oneself, a sense of worthlessness, a sense of hopelessness that things could get better, low energy, and noticeable changes in appetite or sleep.

Depression also distorts a person's viewpoint, allowing them to focus only on their failures and disappointments and to exaggerate these negative things. Depressed thinking can convince someone there is nothing to live for. The loss of pleasure that is part of depression can seem like further evidence that there's nothing good about the present. The hopelessness can make it seem like there will be nothing good in the future; helplessness can make it seem like there's nothing you can do to change things for the better. And the low energy that is part of depression can make every problem (even small ones) seem like too much to handle.

When major depression lifts because a person gets the proper [therapy](#) or treatment, this distorted thinking is cleared and they can find pleasure, energy, and hope again. But while someone is seriously depressed, suicidal thinking is a real concern. When teens are depressed, they often don't realize that the hopelessness they feel can be relieved and that hurt and despair can be healed.

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