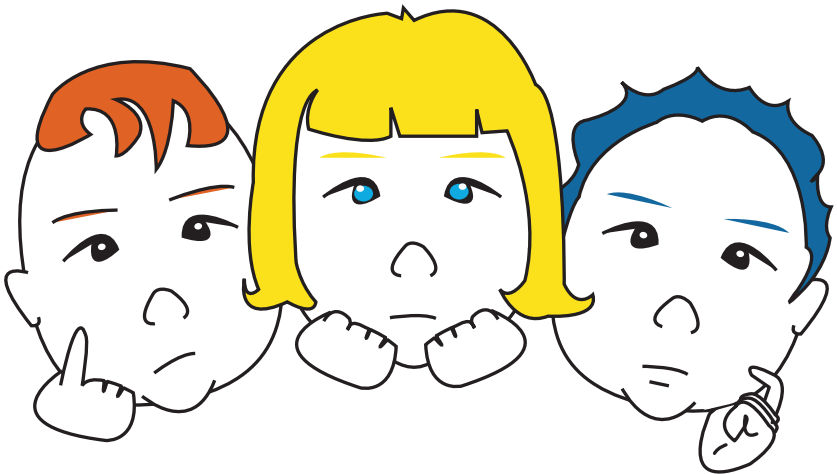


Understanding Mental Illness in Your Family

*When Things Are
Sad and Gloomy*



*For children who have a
parent with Depression*



A REASON TO HOPE. THE MEANS TO COPE.
BRITISH COLUMBIA SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY

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JANSSEN-ORTHO

"No. Let's go to your house instead."



I can't understand her, she keeps getting sad and gloomy for no reason, or for little things! It's scary! It makes me frightened sometimes. I love my mom but this is hard.

- Ian



It's such a drag! I love softball and I made the school team. I was hoping dad would come and watch my games. But he looks so miserable that he doesn't find anything interesting. I wish I knew what to do.

- Jasmine



When's mom gonna get well? Daddy says she's ill. Daddy says mommy is not feeling well, that is why she cries a lot and does not play with me much anymore.

- Eric

So what's with all these moms and dads? They all suffer from an illness called:

Depression

It's a pretty big word, right?

But it's not hard to understand what it means.

Let's see first of all what it feels like to become depressed:

I am sure there have been times when you felt like crying... Or actually did. Maybe you lost something, or you were scared, or you didn't get what you wanted. In any case, it was not a nice thing to feel sad and not able to enjoy things.

Imagine for a moment that you became sad and unhappy for no reason or for things which usually didn't make you sad before. You don't want to feel this way but you do. Yikes! Your friends would no longer want to be around you, because you are no fun anymore.



Imagine again that you wanted to feel better and start having fun again.

But you couldn't. You decide to watch a movie. No, you can't concentrate. You decide to get to that next level in the video game.

It doesn't seem interesting anymore!

You decide that a good nap will do you some good. You can't get a good sleep. An ice-cream perhaps?

No, it doesn't taste good anymore. Some friends come over to invite you to a party, but the thought of it just makes you feel more sick...

You find that you lost your homework. And you start crying.

How embarrassing! This is not like you. Not at all!

So what's happening here?

These are some of the things that happen to someone who gets the illness known as **Depression**.

Now you know what happens in people who have depression. It is an illness of the brain.

It certainly is an unpleasant experience!

But what makes it worse is that sometimes it gets so bad that people who feel this way, start to drink alcohol or take illegal drugs to feel better. Unfortunately it does not work. Except for a little while. Then they not only have depression, but they also have a drinking or drug problem.

Sometimes they can feel so bad that they may decide to even kill themselves! Yes it can get that bad! Some kids whose dad or mom did this wonder whether they are to blame for this. **It is not your fault.**

What causes Depression?

I'm sure you know people who have blood sugar problems (diabetes) or blood pressure problems (hypertension). This isn't very different.

In diabetes, a part of your body in the stomach called the pancreas isn't working right. In depression, a part of your body in the brain isn't working right.

But there are other things too. To get diabetes, it isn't always that only a part of your body does not work right, but other things also have to go wrong. For instance, eating too many sweets and not getting enough exercise all go together to cause the problem.

In the same way, even in depression, other things also usually come together to cause the illness. Having big problems in life and not knowing how to deal with them may be one of those things.

Is it your fault? Absolutely Not!

Sometimes kids wonder whether they did something that made their mom or dad ill. Sometimes their parents or someone else may even say they caused it (probably when they are in a bad mood). **But hey, kids are not the cause of these illnesses!**

Will they get better?

Just like any other illness, there are ways to treat depression.

There are medicines that are used to treat this. They work well but sometimes it takes a while to find the right one.

There are also ‘talk-treatments’. What’s that, you must be wondering.

In talk treatment people learn better methods of handling their problems. When people become ill, they sometimes have difficulty doing the things they could do before.

Have you seen a kid with a broken leg? They need help for a while. They may need crutches to walk with and they need to have someone’s help at other times. Sometimes they have to be taught to walk again.

Very often people with depression are treated with both medicines and talk treatment.

But you must remember that like diabetes, where people have to take treatment for a long time, the same thing is true here also. And some people become ill, get better, fall ill and get better again. Some people have to see the doctor all their lives.

Well, you have learned a lot.

If you know someone who has this illness, now you know what they are going through!

It is no fun to be ill!

Things to know if someone in your family has a mental illness...

It's not your fault. No one can cause another person to have a mental illness.

Your feelings are okay. It's okay to feel sad, lonely, angry, or confused. Other kids have those feelings.

Talk to someone you trust. Share your feelings with someone you trust grandparent, aunt or uncle, school counsellor, teacher or coach.

Take care of yourself. Get involved in things you enjoy doing. Develop a hobby, learn to play a sport, read or do anything you find fun.

It can get better. With medicine and help from doctors, counsellors, family and friends, people with a mental illness do get better.

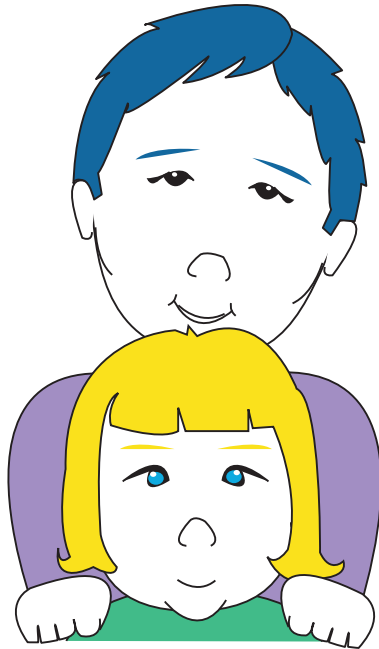
It's no joke. People should never make fun of mental illness. Ask your teacher, librarian or school counsellor to help you learn more about mental illness.

Remember the three C's:

I can't Cause it

I can't Cure it

I can take Care of myself



Things I Can Do To Help Myself

In an emergency I can call:

If I need someone to talk to I can call:

If I am looking for information I can call:

One person I can go to for help is:

Times when I may need help:

Things I can do to help myself feel better:



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For more information on supporting families with
mental illness, please contact:

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