
The Changing Moods of Adolescence: *What's Normal, What's Not and How to Manage*



Peggy Kubert, LCSW
Director of Education
Erika's Lighthouse

Guiding Messages



- Educate yourself about adolescence.
- You can help manage their emotions.
- Trust your gut.
- You *will* survive. 😊



What's Typical Anyway?

EXAMPLES:



- Your child sometimes prefers to be by him/herself.
- Your child wants to drop an activity that they have participated in for years.
- Your child has trouble sleeping one night, which results in trouble getting up for school the following day.
- Your child bursts into tears for what seems to be no reason at all.

ASK YOURSELF THIS...

- Has there been a change?
- Is there a cause to this change?
- How is my child functioning?



— What's “Stress” Anyway?



- A condition that occurs when there is a perceived discrepancy, whether real or not, between the demands of a situation and a person's biological, psychological or social resources.
- Adolescents are exposed to increased rates of stressful life experiences and there is some evidence that increases in stressors account, at least in part, for the increased rates of psychological problems associated with this developmental period.

Stress and Mental Health Problems
Grant, K.E. et al. 2005

What is Depression?

"Depression is a common and real illness that interferes with a child's ability to be productive and enjoy friends, family, activities, school or really anything. Recognizing and treating depression is the most effective way to prevent suicide."

-The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

- Depression is a mood disorder.
- Depression is common.
- Depression can be serious.
- Depression is treatable.
- You are not alone – there is hope.



Erika's Lighthouse

How is Depression Diagnosed?

Must have at least FIVE symptoms for most of every day for two weeks or more.



- Sad, depressed or irritable mood
- Little or no interest in pleasurable or favorite activities
- Significant weight loss, weight gain or change in appetite
- Insomnia or hypersomnia
- Psychomotor agitation or retardation
- Fatigue
- Feelings of worthlessness; excessive or inappropriate guilt
- Diminished ability to think or concentrate; indecisiveness
- Recurrent thoughts of death, suicidal ideation, suicide attempt or plan



Erika's Lighthouse

Depression Across Development



Children

- Behavior regression
- Problems learning
- Physical symptoms

Teens

- Irritability
- Not feeling “good enough”
- Bizarre sleep patterns
- Substance use
- Risk taking
- Aggression
- Acting out
- Problems in school

Other facts

- Girls have depression at slightly higher rates
- Boys are more likely to take their own life



Mental Health Checklist

Use this list to document changes in behavior you have observed for the past two weeks or more.

- Sad, depressed or irritable mood
- Loss of interest in favorite activities
- Significant weight loss or gain, significant change in appearance
- Restlessness, agitation or anxiety
- Fatigue or loss of energy, including sleeping in class
- Feelings of guilt, inappropriate apologies
- Low self-esteem, self deprecating comments
- Trouble concentrating or making decisions
- Repeated thoughts of death, infatuation with dark and sad things
- Frequent headaches and stomach-aches
- Cutting or other self-injury
- Extreme aggressiveness
- Inattention to appearance, or inappropriate clothing for the weather
- Excessive risk-taking behavior
- Drop in school performance
- Low tolerance for frustration
- Lack of motivation or apathy
- Disrespect
- Social withdrawal
- Acting out or misbehavior
- Problems concentrating, unable to store and retrieve information
- Disorganized, forgotten materials and assignments
- Frequent absences or trips to the school nurse
- Crying in class



— We need to talk...



Remember,
no shame, no blame



Erika's Lighthouse

I notice.

"Is everything okay? I've noticed you have been...."

I care.

"I'm concerned because I know this isn't normal for you."

How can I help?

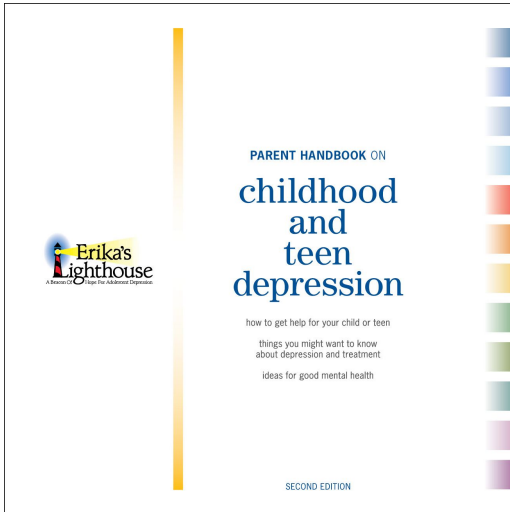
"What can I do to help? Let's come up with a plan together."

Quick tips:

- Ask questions and listen
- Be prepared for the truth
- Validate feelings
- Listen to your gut
- Take action and follow up
- Let the student drive the ship

Finding Help

- Get to the pediatrician and if necessary get a recommendation for a therapist that fits your child's needs and personality.
- Therapy may include talk therapy, medication, or both.
- Interview therapists. If appropriate, include your child in the interview process.
- Check in with your child's therapist and ask yourself if therapy is working.
- Facilitate communication between therapists and other adults—other therapists, pediatrician, school.



Download at
erikaslighthouse.org

Order at amazon.com



P.S.

Journaling is a great way to document what you are seeing and communicate it to your child's therapist. Your child can also keep a journal to record his or her thoughts, moods and behaviors. A medication log is a good idea too.

Talking to your family

- Remember that if your child is dealing with depression, the whole family is dealing with depression.
- Siblings can be especially impacted when another child doesn't feel good, perhaps even wondering if they are the next one to "get" depression.
- Be reassuring and honest about what's going on and that steps are being taken to manage the depression.
- Try to maintain normal family activities.



Our Parent Handbook

SECTION ONE

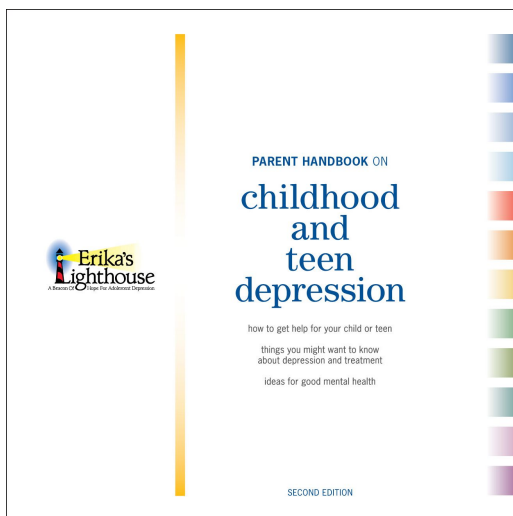
A Practical
Guide

Basic information about depression

How to get help for your child

How to talk to and support your child,
your family and yourself

How to make the best of
the school day



SECTION TWO

A Primer

Information about depression and
its symptoms, kinds of therapists,
therapies, medications and
other treatments

Download a free
e-copy at

erikaslighthouse.org



Resiliency Matters

Resiliency is the ability to overcome challenges of all kinds – trauma, tragedy, personal crises, plain ‘ole’ life problems – and bounce back stronger, wiser, and more personally powerful.



Risk Factors:

- Family conflict
- Health/mental illness
- Social rejection
- Major transitions or change
- Learning disabilities
- Trauma or neglect
- Tragedy or loss
- Poverty



Erika's Lighthouse

Think Balance



The more stress or risk factors at any given time, the more protective factors are needed to be resilient.

Protective factors are individual or environmental characteristics, conditions, or behaviors that reduce the effects of stressful life events, avoid risks and promote social and emotional competence to thrive.



Erika's Lighthouse

How to Build Resilience

Strong meaningful relationships – both with peers and caring adults.



A purpose to one's life – things like setting goals and meeting them.

Connectedness – to your family, to your school, to your community. Understanding that life is bigger than yourself.

One of the strongest protective factors for young people is a family that models clear standards of acceptable behavior. **“Is it healthy, legal and safe?”**



Self Care is Your Friend

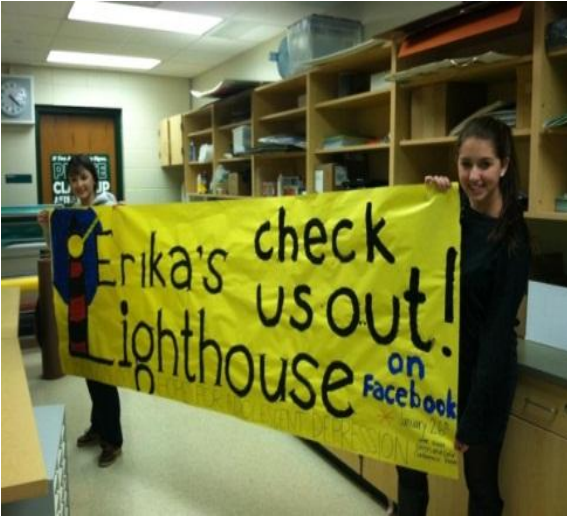


Being a mentor to kids is a tough job, and you can't do it well if you don't take care of yourself first.

- Practice a healthy lifestyle
- Practice coping skills
- Access support



Programs and Resources



Classroom Programs:

The Erika's Lighthouse Program: Depression Awareness for Middle School Students

For early adolescence or middle school

The Erika's Lighthouse Program: Depression and Suicide Awareness for High School Students

For older adolescents or high school

Other Programs and Resources:

- Depression Awareness Campaign Materials for Schools
- Erika's Lighthouse Teen Clubs



Thank you, experts!



www.erikaslighthouse.org