

Understanding Teen Depression

Discussion Materials

Understanding Teen Depression Webinar Group Viewing Guide



Families for Depression Awareness is a national nonprofit organization that helps families recognize and cope with depression and bipolar disorder to get people well and prevent suicides. Our website at www.familyaware.org has tools, information, and educational resources to help you and your loved ones address depression, bipolar disorder, and their impact on your family.

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Understanding Teen Depression Webinar Group Discussion Materials Introduction

The Families for Depression Awareness “**Understanding Teen Depression Webinar**” trains parents, teachers, school staff, youth workers, and other caring adults to recognize depression in teens, communicate about depression with teens and parents, and know when and how to seek help in addressing depression. The Understanding Teen Depression Webinar can be used for adults who are new to the topic of teen depression or in need of a refresher.

We aim to provide up-to-date information that is responsive to families’ needs. Two times a year, we produce a webinar on a different topic related to teen depression to bring you new information and actionable advice.

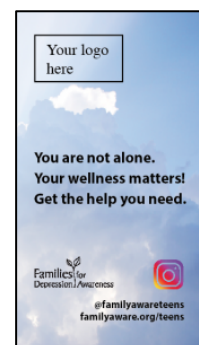
**To access our library of archived and upcoming webinars,
visit our website at familyaware.org/trainings.**



After viewing the webinar as a group, please complete our online evaluation form and have your attendees complete the online evaluation form as well. You’ll help us to improve our program and provide insight for future topics of interest. You can find the link to the survey on the Understanding Teen Depression Webinar trainings page.

If you like the webinar, you may also be interested in our publications. Order Custom Teen Depression Resource Cards, Caregiver Handbook, and brochures at familyaware.org/publications.

We appreciate you taking the time to learn how to help a teen in your life! Visit our website to learn more about recognizing depression and bipolar disorder and how to support a person living with mood disorder. If you have questions or comments, contact us at info@familyaware.org or 781-890-0220.



And, if you would like to support us in our work, please fill out a **How You Can Help** form at www.familyaware.org/volunteer or make a donation at www.familyaware.org/donate. Thank you for your commitment to helping teens and promoting their mental health!

About Us

Families for Depression Awareness is a national nonprofit organization helping families recognize and cope with depression and bipolar disorder to get people well and prevent suicides. Our website at www.familyaware.org has a wide array of tools, information, and resources to help you and your loved ones address depression, bipolar disorder, and their impact on your family.

We extend our grateful thanks to our generous funders for their support of the Teen Depression Education Program. Our current funders are listed on the Teen Depression Webinar page on our website at www.familyaware.org/training.

Materials and Resources

Your goals for the Understanding Teen Depression Webinar may include both educating people about what depression looks like in teens and equipping them to help a teen who is struggling. In the interest of making your time together as valuable as possible, we have put together an equipment list. Use this checklist to ensure you have everything you need.

- ☐ Registration link to access the webinar
- ☐ Device and equipment to stream webinar (computer, projector, speakers, etc.)
- ☐ Comfortable and safe location
- ☐ Webinar hand-outs for each participant
 - ☐ Teen Depression Fact Sheet
 - ☐ Action Plan Worksheet and Sample Action Plan
 - ☐ Role-play Exercises and Conversation Guidelines
- ☐ List of local and national resources: You can ask local schools, pediatricians, parent groups, clergy, and others for the names of local mental health clinics, support groups, organizations, and service providers. Remember: Families for Depression Awareness is available as an educational resource.

If you have concerns for your teen's safety, it's important to act immediately!
Ask if they are considering suicide and don't leave them alone if they are.
Call their provider, 9-1-1, mobile crisis, or take them to the local hospital emergency room.

After Watching the Webinar

Depending on the size of the group, breaking into smaller groups may encourage participation. There are three main activities for after the webinar.

1. Discussing questions and answers
2. Practicing communication
3. Developing an action plan

A Note About Discussions

Decide whether this is a "safe space" in which people can speak openly about their personal or particular concerns. You want people to feel comfortable and participate in the discussion, but there are a few considerations that can affect people's willingness to speak openly. Generally, school employees, therapists, and other professionals are required to follow up or file a report with government authorities if they have concerns about a teen's safety and well-being. Their presence may inhibit people from speaking candidly or asking questions. People may also be concerned about having their personal lives used for gossip, or judgement by others.

Everyone in the room during the discussion should be in agreement about what information is confidential and what are the exceptions. While we recommend starting the discussing by creating group guidelines or norms, at the very least, you must discuss the limits of confidentiality.

Discussion Questions

Decide who will be guiding the discussion question time. Do you feel confident leading the discussion or do you want to bring in someone with more clinical knowledge? Here are some sample questions that we have found effective for group discussion. Adapt these, think of your own, and choose the questions that work best for your audience.

- Does anyone have questions or want to comment on something they heard in the webinar?
- What was the key message for you, or the most interesting thing you heard?
- What was the most surprising thing you heard?
- What concerning behaviors have you seen in your child or a teen in your life?
- What steps have you taken to get help for a teen? Have they been effective?
- What are the qualities in a good mental health provider?
- What role does the school play in your child's mental health?
- What support do you expect from schools?
- How can we get more parents/teachers/caring adults to learn about teen depression and suicide prevention?

Make sure the person leading is an active facilitator: ensure that the conversation doesn't go far off topic, redirect the discussion when necessary, and discourage negative comments about individuals. If attendees are concerned, engage them in talking about next steps to address the problem. For example, if parents are commenting negatively about a school principal, are there members of the group who will present their concerns to the principal? Is there someone who will approach another school official about the perceived problem?

Practicing Communicating

After questions and discussion have concluded, we recommend that the participants break into small groups to engage in a role-play exercise (included on pages 5-6). We know that it's often difficult to talk with teens, plus it's often difficult to talk with anyone about mental health, so the combination of the two can be daunting. One of the best approaches we've found is to rehearse the conversation.

By practicing in advance, a concerned adult

- gets accustomed to the language they'll be using and the emotions that this conversation may cause to surface
- has the opportunity to think of likely and possible reactions and responses, and to prepare for them
- can consider different courses of action that might be taken and identify the appropriate resources and supports that might be useful.

We have provided a scenario about Sally, a 16-year-old, with several different roles for adults. Give it a try! Distribute the scenario and conversation guidelines. Have a volunteer read the scenario about Sally, you or a volunteer can cover the active listening tips, and then have people form pairs or small groups and take on the roles.

After 15-20 minutes, check in with the participants. Do they want more time? Are they ready to come back to the larger group? Invite participants to share what worked well, what was challenging, and what they might do differently if they were in that situation again.

Making a Family Action Plan

The final activity is to get people motivated to create an action plan. After all, watching the Understanding Teen Depression Webinar is a good first step in helping a teen, but the real challenge is taking what you've learned and putting it into action. We've developed a template that may help to identify a problem and how to address it. You can distribute the Family Action Plan or direct participants to find the template on our website at familyaware.org/actionplan.

Explain to the group that people are more likely to follow through on their intentions if they put it in writing. Urge them to make a commitment to act, whether or not they use the template provided. If the group is willing, you can invite people to share the action they intend to take, and when they will do it.

Reminder: Take the Online Evaluation

Before the group departs, remind them to take the online evaluation to help improve the program and submit new topics on teen depression. You'll find the link on the Understanding Teen Depression Webinar training page at www.familyaware.org/trainings.

Please contact us at info@familyaware.org or 781-890-0220 if you have questions or comments!

Thank you for hosting the Teen Depression Webinar!

Role-play Exercise 1: Sally, a Teen with Depression

Sally, 16-years-old, is known as an outgoing, intelligent sophomore at high school who generally does well in school and wants to be a cheerleader. She made the squad her freshman year, but there was more competition in the second year and she didn't make the final cut.

Even before try outs, Sally struggled at school. Her grades slipped in a few of her classes because she wasn't doing her homework. After she didn't make the cheerleading squad, she dropped out of drama club, which she had been in since middle school. Her family noticed that she was increasingly getting upset over small things like her younger sister singing at the dinner table or her older brother answering the phone before she could. On the weekends, she would sleep late and on weekdays after school, she slept most of the day. Then, she spent much of her time after dinner in her room. She used to hang out with friends after school, but lately she has been coming home alone. She says her friends have other activities that keep them busy.

Initially, Sally's parents figured that she was having a hard time adjusting to high school, but they've become more concerned as Sally has become more sullen. They have heard from other parents, however, that their children have similar behaviors.

Sally's chemistry teacher has had the closest relationship with Sally among the school staff. Until recently, Sally loved chemistry and was considering becoming a scientist. Now the chemistry teacher is frustrated that Sally hasn't been showing more enthusiasm and has failed to turn in assignments. He is ready to give her a failing grade, which would require her to attend summer school in order to get enough credits to move to the next grade.

Be an Active Listener

- Show you care
 - *"I know this is a difficult subject. I really care about Sally."*
- Be an active listener
 - Give the person your full attention
 - Allow the person to talk and then paraphrase what they say to make sure you understand
 - Allow the other person to clarify or elaborate on what is said
- Ask questions
 - *"What are your concerns?"*
 - *"What have you noticed?"*
 - *"Why do you think this is happening?"*

Role-play Exercise 2: Conversation Guidelines

Talking to Sally

[Role 1: Parent, Teacher, or Other Trusted Adult] [Role 2: Sally]

- Ask Sally about how she has been feeling and what has been happening in her life
- Tell her you are worried and that you want her to be safe
- Share with her the changes you have seen that have made you concerned
- Talk with her about how those symptoms may be a sign of depression
- Affirm that depression is an illness and that it is treatable
- Assess whether she seems in immediate danger of harming herself
- Help her to determine to whom she can turn (parent, mental health clinician)
- Help her work through what the next steps will be

Talking to Sally's Parents

[Role 1: Teacher, Counselor, or Other Caring Adult] [Role 2-3: Sally's Parent(s)]

- Explain that you really care about Sally and are worried about her
- Start with questions such as “How have things been going?” or “Have you noticed changes in Sally? Are there any changes in her life?”
- Listen to their responses and explain what you have noticed and that it seems to be more than normal moodiness or part of growing up
- Talk with them about depression and how it can affect a teen and affirm that depression is an illness and that it is treatable
- Be aware that parents may feel guilty or responsible for her changes in behavior
- Suggest resources and offer to help them connect with others who can help
- Help them determine the next steps to help Sally such as contacting a mental health clinician

Talking to School Staff (or Sally's Chemistry Teacher)

[Role 1-2: Sally's Parent(s)] [Role 3: Sally's Teacher, Counselor, or Other Staff Member]

- Start with questions about Sally's behavior and the teacher's concerns
- Listen to the teacher and empathize with his concerns and share with the teacher your concern that Sally may be experiencing depression
- Share the symptoms of depression and its potential impact on academics
- Ask for the teacher's help in approaching Sally as a trusted adult and bringing her to the guidance counselor
- Ask about practical options to help Sally with the academic struggles and suggest a team approach with parents and school staff

Special Tips: If You Are a Parent Talking to the School

- Thank the administrator for taking the time to talk with you
- Ask questions about how Sally has been doing and what people at school may have noticed
- Explain what changes in behavior you have noticed and that you are concerned about how this is affecting her academics
- Talk about how depression can affect a teen and invite the administrator to help you think through how to help Sally
- Ask about what resources the school can offer and create a plan to follow up on the discussion

Sample Promotional Flyer

Join us for the Families for Depression Awareness **Teen Depression Webinar** and learn about depression in teens, how you can help them, and how you can talk with them and their families about it.

Learn about

- signs and causes of depression
- treatment for depression
- when and where to get help
- how to talk with teens, parents and school staff.



Date:

Time:

Location:

R.S.V.P by _____ **to** _____

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