













SERIES ON MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

SYMPTOMS/BEHAVIOURS

- Sleeps during class
- Defiant or disruptive and refuses to participate in activities
- Incomplete assignments, failed tests and classes
- Excessive tardiness and frequent absences
- Fidgety or restless, distracting to other students
- Isolating and quiet
- Refusal to do school work and general non-compliance with rules
- Talks about death or suicide

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Students experiencing depression may display a visible change in interest for school work and activities. Grades may drop significantly due to lack of interest, loss of motivation or excessive absence. They may withdraw and refuse to socialize with peers or participate in group projects.

-  Anxiety
-  Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
-  Asperger's Syndrome
-  Autism Spectrum Disorder
-  Conduct Disorder
-  Depression
-  Eating Disorders
-  Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
-  Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
-  Oppositional Defiant Disorder
-  Reactive Attachment Disorder
-  Tourette Syndrome

TO LEARN MORE, PLEASE CONTACT:

Rainbow District School Board
Gord Ewin Centre for Education
275 Loach's Road
Sudbury, ON P3E 2P8
Phone: 705.523.3308
rainbowschools.ca

This series on mental health and well-being is a
Rainbow District School Board Parent Involvement Committee project
funded by the Ministry of Education Parent Engagement Office.



DEPRESSION

ABOUT DEPRESSION

All children feel down or low at times. Feelings of sadness with an intensity that persists for weeks or months may be a symptom of Major Depressive Disorder or Dysthymic Disorder (milder, but more chronic low mood). These disorders affect a person's emotions, thoughts, behaviours and body, and can negatively impact school performance and lead to alcohol/drug abuse or even suicide.

Studies by the Canadian Mental Health Association show that approximately five per cent of male and 12 per cent of female youth ages 12 to 19 have experienced a major depressive episode at some point. A staggering 3.2 million youth in Canada, within the same age group, are at risk of developing depression.

Males appear to suffer earlier in childhood, while depression is more prevalent in females during adolescence. Depression affects childhood development and is difficult to diagnose in youth. It is also more severe, difficult to treat, and more likely to re-occur than adult forms of the disorder.

A depressed child becomes stuck and unable to pass through normal developmental stages. Common symptoms are:

- Sadness that won't subside
- Hopelessness and irritability
- School avoidance
- Persistent boredom, low energy or poor concentration
- Changes in sleeping and eating patterns
- Frequent complaints of aches and pains
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Self-critical remarks

Students with depression who used to enjoy playing with friends may spend most of their time alone or with a different group of peers. Students generally lose interest in activities that were once fun, may talk about death or suicide, and even self-medicate with alcohol or drugs.

Although they may not seem sad, children who cause trouble at home or at school may be depressed. Younger children could pretend to be sick, be overactive, cling to their parents, seem accident prone, or refuse to go to school. Older children and teens often refuse to participate in activities with family or friends and stop paying attention to their appearance. They may also be restless, grouchy or aggressive.

Most mental health professionals believe that depression has a biological origin. Research indicates that children are at greater risk of developing depression if one or both of their parents suffered from the illness.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS AND CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

- Reassure students that they can catch up. Show them the steps they need to take and be flexible and realistic about your expectations. School failures and unmet expectations can exacerbate the depression.
- Help students use and recognize realistic and positive statements, contributions, performances, and outlook on the future.
- Maintain a record of accomplishments. Students see issues in black and white terms, either all bad or all good.
- Reduce classroom pressures.
- Break tasks into small components.
- Encourage gradual social interaction, for instance small group work.
- Ask parents/guardians what would be helpful in the classroom to reduce pressure or motivate the child.

This fact sheet is not to be used for the purpose of making a diagnosis. It is a reference for understanding and to provide information about different behaviours and mental health issues you may encounter in the classroom.



Resources:

The Council for Exceptional Children: www.cec.sped.org
National Institute for Mental Health: www.nimh.nih.gov
SAMHSA'S National Mental Health Information: www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov
SAVE (Suicide Awareness Voices of Education): www.save.org