

# beyond the blues

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a workbook to help teens  
overcome **depression**

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# introduction

Dear Reader,

Many people experience depression at one time or another in their lives, but during the adolescent years, the vast number of physical, emotional, and mental changes that occur make teens even more susceptible to feelings of confusion or sadness. However your depression originates, you will need to learn to handle it so that you can go about your daily life and be happy.

Whether your feelings of depression are mild or intense, long term or temporary, inherited or situational, you can be helped by working through the exercises in this book. They are not meant to replace other treatments, but to supplement them, so you may also talk to a counselor or take medication for depression. Remember that working on managing depression is similar to taking a class or learning anything new: the more you put into it, the more you will get out of it. If you skim through this book, you can learn a little; if you really explore and work through the exercises, you can make your life better.

Since everyone is different and heals in slightly different ways, a wide variety of exercises have been presented. It is your job to investigate them all and find the ones that are right for you. Each time you try an exercise, think of it as an experiment. Your goal is to learn something about yourself. If one exercise doesn't work well for you, it doesn't mean you have failed. It means you have learned that the exercise isn't the right one for you at this moment. Keep going until you find something that does work. You may have to give some activities a second or third try until you feel comfortable, and that's normal.

It is important to remember that if your feelings of depression do not go away, if they get worse, or if they begin to frighten you, you must tell someone who can help to keep you safe. Several of the exercises at the end of the book talk about this. Be sure to share them with an adult who can help you.

Know that as you work through this book, you are doing something good for yourself. You are learning to cope with your feelings and take care of yourself in a healthy way.

## \* introduction

You can learn to manage depression just like you learned to tie your shoes or read and write. Just give it a chance and be patient with yourself. You deserve to feel good, and you will if you keep working at it!

Lisa M. Schab, LCSW

# defining depression

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## you need to know

Depression is a disturbance in someone's mood. It usually involves a feeling of sadness, a lack of physical and emotional energy, and a loss of interest in things that used to bring pleasure. Depression is one of the most common emotional problems and also one of the most treatable.

Everyone has days when they feel more happy or more sad. You may feel great when your team wins the championship, when you get a good grade on a test, or when you are having fun at a party. You may feel really down when you have an argument with your best friend, when your parents won't let you go to a concert, or when you don't get a part in the school play. Normal sadness passes in a reasonable amount of time, and soon you are feeling better again.

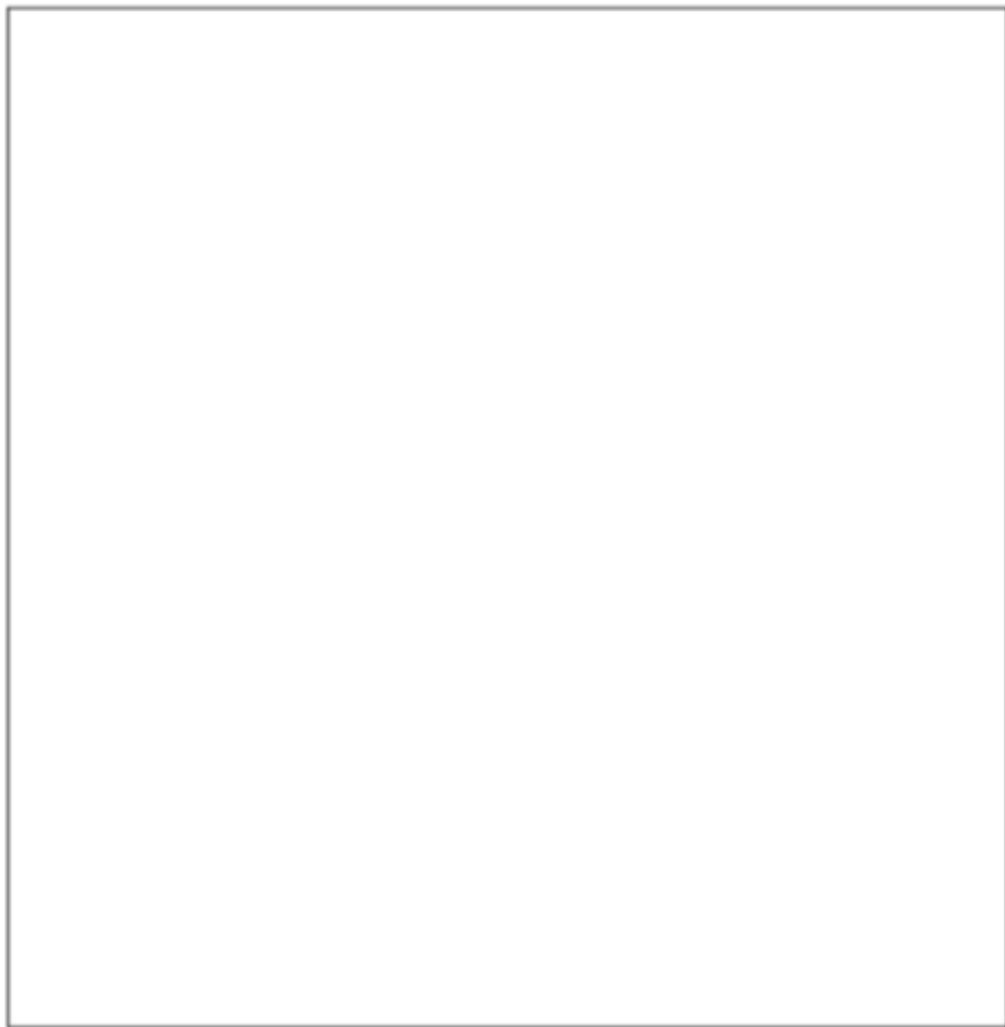
Depression lasts longer and feels deeper than normal sadness. It may cause you to feel very bad about yourself or hopeless about your future. It may affect your thoughts, your behavior, your appetite, or your ability to sleep. Depression may cause you to see reality in a distorted way, as if everything is negative and difficult, and problems may appear to be bigger than you can bear.

People who feel depressed often feel very tired physically and emotionally. They may stop spending time with friends or doing other things that used to give them pleasure, because they just don't feel up to it. They may also start to complain of physical problems, such as headaches and stomachaches. At its worst, depression can make people feel as if they don't want to be alive.

The more you understand about depression and the more you learn about how to combat it, the easier it will be to either manage these feelings or eliminate them altogether. The exercises in this book can help you to do this.

## directions

In the space below, use line, color, texture, or form to show what your feelings of depression would look like if you could see them.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a drawing or artistic expression.

## more to do

Look back at your picture and describe what you have drawn. Tell why you used the lines, colors, textures, and forms that you did.

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Describe how you feel when you look at your picture.

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Describe what you have already tried to do to relieve feelings of depression. Tell how well each of these things worked for you.

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Think about the fact that you can learn new ways to cope with and combat depression. Tell what you believe or how you feel about this fact.

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Write a statement that describes your commitment to learning how to deal with depression. Make a conscious decision to keep that commitment.

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## 2 symptoms of depression

### you need to know

There are many symptoms of depression. Some of them are very clear, and some may seem confusing. Each person's symptoms and experience of depression may be a little different from everyone else's. Learning to recognize your own symptoms can help you to both prevent and manage depression.

Blake has been getting into trouble lately. He can't seem to control his temper at school or at home, and he is snapping at everyone, including his teachers. He has been cutting classes because it just seems easier than having to face people. Instead of going to class, he walks to the convenience store and smokes cigarettes in the parking lot. He thinks about running away and wonders where he could go.

Sabrina's friends are worried about her. She hasn't been returning their calls and seems distracted and spacey at school. When she comes out of the bathroom her eyes sometimes look red, as if she's been crying. She often goes home right after school instead of hanging out to shoot baskets like she used to. When her friends ask what is wrong, Sabrina just shrugs and says, "I don't know."

Maddie has been having trouble sleeping. She lies in bed and stares at the ceiling for hours, thinking about all the things she did wrong that day. Her grades have been slipping because she keeps forgetting her homework. She always seems tired and has no interest in eating. She feels bad about herself and wishes she could be "normal" and "cool" like her friends.

All three of these teens are feeling depressed, but they are experiencing different symptoms.



## directions

All of the symptoms below may be expressions of depression. Circle any that you have experienced.

trouble sleeping	unhappiness	significant weight change
reckless behavior	drug abuse	withdrawal from friends
feeling helpless	constant boredom	skipping classes often
fear of death	increased irritability	no interest in activities
alcohol abuse	feeling worthless	increase in sex drive
trouble focusing	achy body parts	constant desire to be alone
increased anger	difficulty making decisions	overly negative attitude
frequent crying	strong feelings of guilt	feeling like a failure
self-injury	suicidal thoughts	disappointment in self
physical aggression	forgetfulness	missing appointments
decrease in sex drive	increased family conflicts	withdrawal into self
no interest in hygiene	constant restlessness	thoughts of running away

Describe anything else you have experienced that you think may be a symptom of depression.

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