



Tips to Manage  
**Depression**  
For Youth - Toolkit

DR NEKESHIA HAMMOND

# Tips to Manage Depression For Youth - Toolkit

It's a sad, but true reality, depression in our youth is at an all-time high. Between the constant online stimulation and social pressures, young children and teenagers are struggling with their identities more than ever. Depression is much more than being sad. It comes in many shapes and sizes and is sourced from many places.

According to the [London Journal of Primary Care](#), depression is a

**“common condition that leads to a lot of suffering and adverse social consequences, such as poor school performance and the loss of friendships. The longer an illness lasts, the greater the social consequences, and sometimes these effects cannot be reversed.”**

This is why it is critically important to address depression in a child's life and understand how to treat it. Managing depression in adolescents has transformed within generational lifestyles, and caregivers must take the time to stop and check in. The first step is recognizing something is wrong.

Attempting to identify depression can be difficult and can have multiple driving factors. **For example, is your child irritable, holding onto guilt, losing focus, withdrawing socially, oversleeping, or disinterested in activities they used to love? Or perhaps they are experiencing major life changes, physical or emotional stress, or loss of a loved one within your household.** If any of this sounds familiar, your child may be suffering from a mild or even severe bout of depression. With this in mind, below are some tips to aid you in your journey of managing depression in your children.



# Keeping Active

Physical activity is one of the most highly recommended ways to fight depression. Moving your body stimulates the brain releasing natural endorphins. Many studies show that younger kids who exercise frequently experience fewer symptoms in comparison to kids who do not. Not only is the physicality of it beneficial, but the sense of community within sports teams will keep your kids interacting with others who share similar interests.



## Extracurricular Activities

Not all kids enjoy playing sports, and forcing kids to join them might not always be the best way to bring positivity back into their daily lives. Understanding what they enjoy is critical if you hope to get them engaged in something, and every child is different. For example, you may choose to get them involved in fashion design, pottery, learning an instrument, woodworking, painting, dance, chess club, etc. Activities like this will allow a child to have a creative outlet.

## Maintaining A Healthy Diet

Maintaining a healthy diet is a critical component of having a “happy brain.” Food that is highly processed and loaded with hormones isn’t necessarily the best for growth and development. It’s important to watch what your children are consuming. Everything we put into our bodies can have an effect, positive or negative, on our physical form, our gut chemistry, and even our minds. In fact, many studies have shown that a diet of excessive high fats, processed sugars, and general junk food have a direct link to depression and anxiety.



# Open Communication Without Judgment

It may not always feel comfortable, but open communication with your children is imperative if you want to help manage depression or even prevent it. Children don't always understand who they are becoming, and they are trying to figure out a lot while their hormones are pulsating through their rapidly changing bodies. Some may be scared and confused, and others might rebel and lash out, but the best thing to do is simply hear them out without judgment. The fastest way to close communication between caregiver and child is to react negatively when they open up to you.



# Giving Children Space to Make Their Own Choices

As scary as it might be, giving your children the space to think and act for themselves is extremely valuable to their cognitive growth. Kids often get lost in their parents' identity making it their own, and when they start to have different feelings they tend to feel shame. Allowing them to wear what they want, have that sleepover with a friend, etc. Even if it might not be something you necessarily agree with. It helps them with the ability to express themselves.



# Personal Time

Although your children may pull away and act embarrassed to be around you, they still need the reassurance that you love and care about them. Spend personal time with them and allow them to connect with you on a deeper level, opening the gates of trust and understanding. Taking them to a movie, going on a walk together to a coffee shop, helping them with their homework, letting them help you make dinner, taking a painting class together, throwing around a baseball, or even letting them into your daily work life. There are many things you could do to make a child feel included.



# Community Service or Volunteer Work

This might not be something kids will necessarily be thrilled about, but volunteer work could potentially open their eyes to a different perspective by giving valuable time to others. Volunteering at a food bank, picking up trash on your local beach, or having them donate something they care about to someone that might need it more - these simple acts teach children the power of gratitude and empathy, social skills, bonding, and more. Volunteer work and community service could positively affect your children both now and in the long term.



# Teaching Mindfulness

Mindfulness can be a tricky one. It is a beautiful skill once mastered, but even for adults, it can be a tough thing to do. Introducing mindfulness at a young age will benefit your child greatly. Benefits include improved academic performance, increased focus, decreased levels of stress and depression, and increased compassion.



# Encourage Self Love

In a world of constant judgment within beauty standards and financial pressures, kids need support in loving themselves more than ever. Social media is a silent killer and one of the main causes for insecurities. Explain to them that the online world is a facade, and teach them resilience to handle outside pressures. Encourage them to be themselves wholeheartedly because the relationship you have with yourself will always be the most important.



# Model The Things You Preach

In the end, children feed off of the immediate idols in their lives - their caregivers, siblings, teachers, and adults they regularly interact with. They look up to them for most things throughout their lives. If you are a positive model to them, they will follow.



## Conclusion and Next Steps

While some children can heal with just the tips we've shared here, others might need additional tools for managing their depression. If you or your children are still struggling, you might want to consider seeking the aid of a professional. Seeking treatment from professionals is one of the keys to fighting against this severe mental disorder.

Prevention involves psychotherapy and medical intervention based on how severe the condition is.

Along with having an unbiased third party, so a child can emotionally vent.

In some cases, the best course of action is antidepressants because sometimes depression runs deeper in biological terms. Antidepressants are not meant for every child but may be beneficial.

Depression can be a scary thing to deal with, but you're not alone, and there is help out there. You don't have to suffer in silence. Before making any decisions, do your due diligence in researching and finding a trustworthy provider that will help you along the way.



# About Dr. Hammond

Dr. Nekeshia Hammond is an author, international speaker, psychologist, and an expert in children's mental health. She is the founder of Hammond Psychology & Associates, and the former President of the Florida Psychological Association.

Dr. Hammond speaks to various groups to help increase public education about mental health issues. She has been featured on ABC, NBC, CBS, FOX, as well as various magazines and radio shows throughout the globe. She is the host of Mental Health Moment with Dr. Hammond and author of the books **ADHD Explained: What Every Parent Needs to Know** and **The Practical Guide to Raising Emotionally Healthy Children**.



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