

Don't forget about mental health: The effects of anger and depression on teens and their families

Often when we think of health, we think of our physical health—for example, whether or not we have the flu, or conditions like diabetes or asthma. However, mental health is another important component of our wellbeing. This winter, BeWell health workshops focused on anger and depression, two aspects of mental health that often affect teenagers.

It is estimated that nearly one in five teenagers will suffer from a depressive episode before reaching adulthood.

Anger and depression

It is normal to feel sad or be in a bad mood every once and a while. However, if these feelings don't go away, or become difficult to deal with, you may have depression. Some signs of depression include: losing interest in activities you used to enjoy, feeling worthless, and isolating yourself from

family and friends.

Some people who suffer from depression may also feel angry. Anger is a healthy response to many situations, and it is natural to be angry when we are stressed, don't have

control, or when we are treated unfairly.

However, anger becomes unhealthy when it causes us harm others or ourselves.

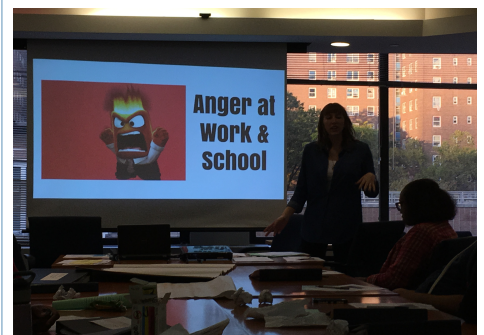
Identifying depression in teens

It can be hard to identify the symptoms of depression in teens, especially because young people tend to experience "regular" mood swings. Experts recommend that parents have regular conversations with their teens. They should resist the urge to solve a teen's problems for them, and instead listen and help them problem-solve on

their own. If parents sense that their teen is struggling, they can talk to teachers or seek out mental health counseling for their child.

Anger and depression in parents

Anger and depression do not just affect teenagers—parents can suffer from them, too. When parents are struggling with depression or anger, their children are often also affected. For example, they may be at higher risk of developing anger and depression themselves, and of getting in trouble at school and with the law.



BeWell Youth Board members prepare for the mental health workshop.

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Many mental health problems are thought to have a genetic component, which means that they sometimes run in families. For example, a person with a relative who has depression is nearly five times more likely to develop depression than someone with relatives who do not suffer from the disease. Even when there is no genetic link, the family members of someone struggling with mental health problems are often also affected.

If someone in your family is struggling with mental health, BeWell has resources to help! To be connected to services for you or your family members, contact BeWell staff via phone or text message (646-245-4000) or via email (bewellbu@gmail.com).

You are not alone: Resources for mental health

NYC WELL

Provides free, confidential mental health support for New Yorkers. To be connected with a counselor, text “WELL” to 65173, call 1-888-NYC-WELL, or chat online at <https://nycwell.cityofnewyork.us>. Translator services are available.

BeWell Community Guide

Ask your scholar or BU Fellow for a copy. They are free, and make it easy to find resources for mental health near your BridgeUP site. Guides in Spanish available soon!

Religious leaders and faith providers trained in counseling

Hotlines

- Boystown National Crisis, Resource, & Referral Hotline (800-448-3000)
- LIFENET (800-LIFENET)
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline (800-273-TALK)
- Trevor Project Lifeline (866-4-U-TREVOR)

www.GetHealthyHarlem.org

Youth Anxiety Center at New York Presbyterian

Provides individual therapy, medication management, and other services for young adults. Visit www.nyp.org/youthanxiety/locations-contacts to view locations and contact information.



BridgeUP scholars at Countee Cullen participate in the mental health workshop. They talked about the stigma often associated with mental health, and the importance of seeking help when you need it.

Tips for staying mentally healthy from NYC Well

1. **Connect with others**—Develop supportive relationships with others.
2. **Play!**—Do something that you truly enjoy every day
3. **Ask for help when you need it**—Check out the resources above for suggestions of who to talk to, or call or text BeWell at 646-245-4000
4. **Take care of your body**—Healthy bodies make for happier people
5. **Get enough sleep**—Put last month’s sleep hygiene tips into practice
6. **Deal with stress**—Identify what makes you stressed to learn how to cope
7. **Think about today**—Focus on living in the present
8. **Give back**—We feel better when we help others, even in small ways
9. **Challenge yourself**—Learning new things keeps us mentally fit
10. **Drink less alcohol and avoid drugs**—Alcohol and drugs can make our problems worse

Ask Dr. C.

Dear Dr. C.,

Thank you for your response last month. Our whole family has put your suggestions for good sleep hygiene into practice, but my daughter, Deidra, is still having trouble sleeping, and just doesn’t seem herself. Her blood tests and physical exam were normal, so I’m starting to worry there’s something else going on. What can I do?

- Worried Sick

Dear Worried Sick,

It’s possible that there is something else going on, since difficulty sleeping can be a sign of other health problems. Since Deidra already had a physical exam, your next step may be to make her an appointment with a mental health counselor, for example a social worker or psychologist.

A counselor will talk to Deidra and screen her for mental health problems like depression, anxiety, and excessive anger. If these things are affecting her sleep, one option the counselor may recommend is cognitive behavioral therapy, or CBT. CBT helps people develop coping strategies for their problems, and works to change their attitudes and behaviors. It is used to treat a wide range of mental health conditions.

In the meantime, encourage Deidra to eat well and exercise, record her feelings in a journal, spend time in nature, and avoid drugs and alcohol. Make sure you take care of yourself, too, since caring for someone struggling with mental health problems comes with its own challenges.

Dr. Cohall is board-certified in both Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine. He is a Professor of Public Health and Pediatrics at the Columbia University Medical Center. In addition to supervising health services at several clinics, he has a private practice in Adolescent/Young Adult medicine at NY Presbyterian Hospital.