

Resources available for people dealing with depression

Although your neighbor appears on the outside to be living a “normal” life, and your child is breaking sports records left and right, the people around you might be suffering inside from depression.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, 9.5 percent or 20.9 million American adults suffer from a depressive illness in any given year.

Depression manifests itself through the presence of symptoms typically lasting everyday for about two weeks in adults, and one week in children or adolescents. Because children are not as articulate as adults in expressing their emotions, parents, guardians, teachers older friends and relatives must be able to look for early signs of trouble.

The most common symptoms of depression in adults, adolescents and children include:

Fatigue or loss of energy

Difficulty concentrating, remembering details and making decisions

Feelings of worthlessness, helplessness or guilt

Insomnia, early-morning wakefulness, or excessive sleeping

Loss of interest in activities and hobbies

Thoughts of suicide; attempts at suicide

A sense of restlessness, or being slowed down

Significant weight loss or gain

Persistent aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems

Excessive alcohol consumption and drug abuse.

Depression is a highly treatable condition, and steps may be taken in an effort to prevent it. However, some forms of depression may not be preventable; those forms most often manifest because of a chemical malfunction in the brain and may have been caused, for example, by experiencing repeated trauma as child (i.e. living with an alcoholic and/or abusive parent, being bullied by peers). The good news is that studies show that depression may be alleviated, or even at times prevented, by adopting healthy lifestyle changes and seeking professional treatment.

Steps to potentially prevent depression include making time to relax and enjoy special times with friends and family; adhering to a well-balanced diet; staying focused on a fun and results-oriented exercise program and creating a healthy and happy living environment.

Although treatment of depression is effective 60 to 80 percent of the time, according to the World Health Organization, less than 25 percent of individuals with depression receive adequate treatment. For immediate help, the following is a list of local resources to assist people who are struggling with depression:

Family Resource Center: 11695 Donner Pass Road, Truckee (530) 587.2513

Sierra Agape Center (Offers free peer counseling), 10153 West River St., Truckee (530)414.1885

Sierra Family Services, 2690 Lake Forest Road, Tahoe City (530) 581.4054.

