

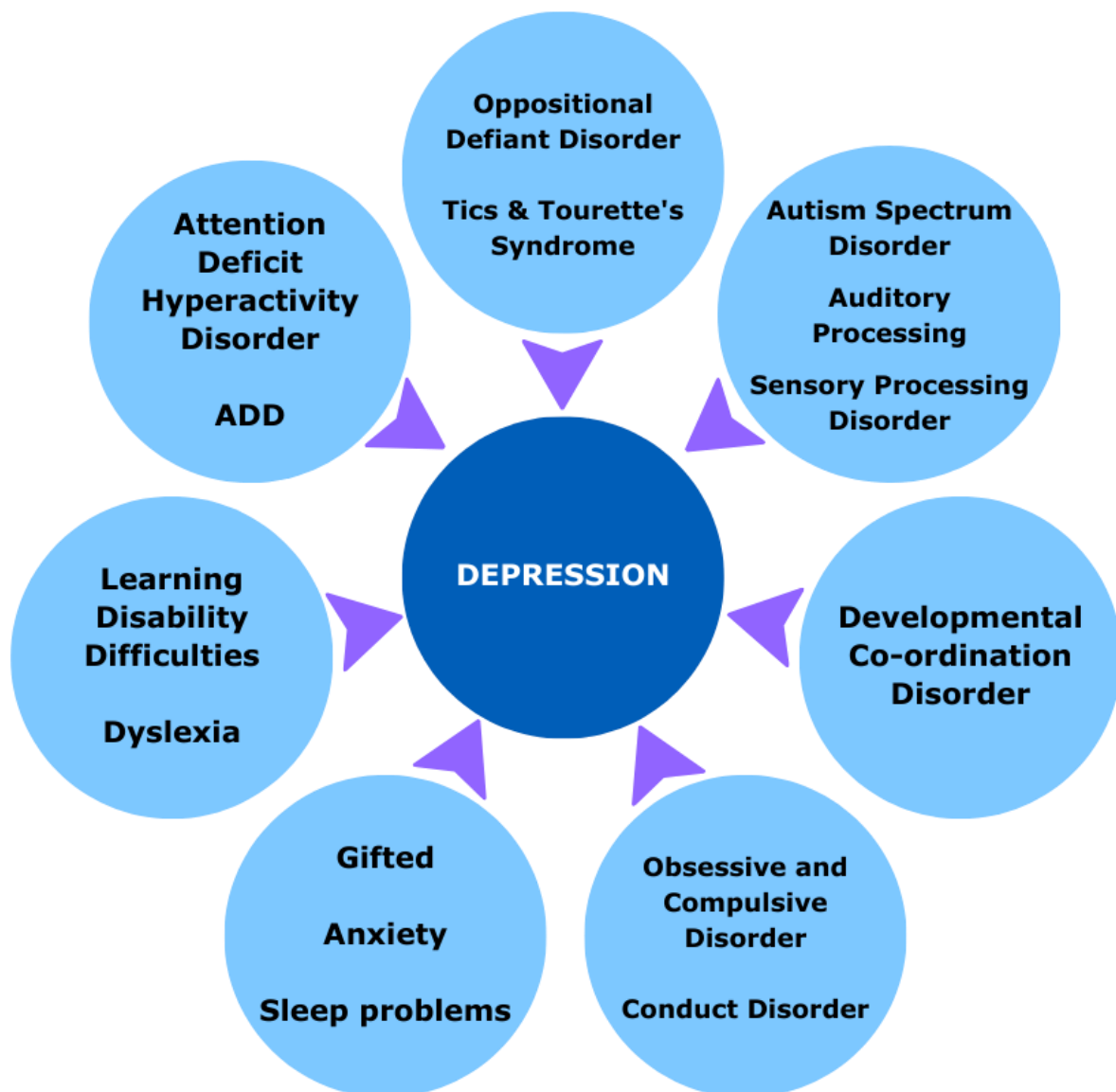
DEPRESSION

What is Depression Condition?

Depression is more than just feeling sad or having a bad day.

It occurs if the child is persistently sad for a long period of time, such as weeks or months. It can affect their ability to do everyday things and they may find it hard to feel pleasure or take interested in activities. The child/young person may cry a lot for no reason, have sleep problems, lose interest in activities that he or she previously enjoyed, have low energy, poor appetite and sometimes have thoughts of self-harm.

It is important to talk to someone. Depression is a long-lasting low mood disorder.



What are the causes of depression in young people?

There is no single factor that can lead to the onset of depression.

Genes and family tendencies can determine whether someone is likely to be more susceptible to depression, but there are also many other factors that can act as potential triggers which may prompt depression – one is the pressure of modern life on young people.

Young people are often exposed to unrealistic expectations through social media, which puts pressure on them to meet these expectations. They are exposed to idealised images which may give them expectations on how they are meant to look, what they are meant to have and how they are meant to behave. If young people feel that they do not meet these expectations that are portrayed to them via social media, television, or peers, they may feel that they are not good enough or disadvantaged. This can lead to depression as well as problems with self-esteem, and confidence if not dealt with appropriately.

School can be a positive setting for learning, growth and development for many young people, but it can also be a place where young people struggle to fit in. There can also be issues with keeping up with a heavy work load, performance pressures and exam stress. Failing an important exam at school can cause great frustration and may lead to depressed feelings.

Bullying is also an issue that unfortunately affects many young people. Bullying can seriously affect a young person's mental and physical health. It can lead to feelings of anxiety, low self-esteem and poor concentration. The transition from one school to another or the leaving of school can also act as a trigger for the onset of depression.

Stressful relationships can also act as triggers for depression. For some young people, a negative, stressful or unhappy family atmosphere can affect their self-esteem and lead to depression.

- Conflict within the family
- Divorce or separation leading to a change in living arrangements can lead to feelings of insecurity
- Guilt
- Anger
- Rejection or a sense of loss.
- Poverty
- Abuse and violence within the family are also key contributors.
- Difficulties in making and maintaining friendships or relationships, can lead to low self-esteem and a loss of confidence which in turn makes it more difficult for the young person to find someone they feel comfortable with to share their worries.

Other triggers that have been identified in the lives of young people that may lead to the onset of depression include;

- The loss of a loved one
- Physical illness of self or loved one
- Living with a parent or relative who has depression

- Being subject to physical or emotional abuse
- Weight gain, something embarrassing happening, or financial setback

How to recognise the signs of depression in young people

It is not always easy to recognise the signs of depression in young people. Young people face many challenges as they find their way in life but most balance their common troubles with good friendships, success in school or outside activities and develop a strong sense of self. Certain negative behaviours are to be expected, such as occasional bad moods and acting out, however depression is something different.

Depression can lead to dramatic long term changes in personality, mood and behaviour.

Certain signs can help to identify whether a young person is suffering from depression, whilst considering these signs it is also important to acknowledge how long the symptoms have been present, their severity and the degree to which the young person is acting in a different manner to his or her usual self.

Some signs of depression in young people include:

- Moodiness and irritability
- Withdrawing from family, friends and regular activities
- Changes in sleeping and eating patterns
- Fatigue and lack of energy
- Difficulty concentrating
- Tearfulness and frequent crying
- Feeling guilty or bad, being self-blaming or self-critical
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Feeling unhappy, miserable or lonely a lot of the time

If a young person has all or many of these symptoms it may indicate that the young person is depressed.

Treatment available

If you feel that your young person is showing signs that they are depressed, it is important to seek professional help in order for a diagnosis to be made.

Other sources of help:

NHS - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/children-depressed-signs/>

Action for Children - <https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/>

Childline - Children and young people under 19 can call 0800 1111 for free support.
– <https://www.childline.org.uk/>

Young Minds Parents Helpline - Call 0808 802 5544 for free Mon-Fri from 9.30am to 4pm

