

Case study: teenage stress and depression



Stress among adolescents that leads to depression will be discussed in this paper. Stress is defined as a major burden in teenage life and is illustrated on how this can stimulate the development of depression, a more severe case of stress, in which teenagers become overwhelmed with a mix of emotions. These two conditions are compared among their characteristics that identify them from each other. The growth between stress and depression are similar, but they differ in many ways. Symptoms of stress and depression are explained and how they are induced. This subject emphasizes on how teens are more commonly diagnosed with it. The cause and effects of stress are stated and how this can pressure adolescents, and eventually lead to depression. Depression cannot only pressure teens, but manipulate them, resulting in unwanted behavior, such as suicide. Prevention of stress is focused upon to point out the influence of communication and its importance. The discussion of an open relationship between troubled teens and guardians is included. Research showed how these conditions are highly associated with teenage suicide. Although suicide is commonly associated with stress, there are many exhibited behaviors that are listed. Stress and depression in adolescents are highly emphasized to differentiate these two conditions and distinguish the importance of communication.

Keywords: teen stress, teen depression

Teenage Stress and Depression

“ Your teenage years are the best years of your life.” Ever heard someone say this? Through Experience, adults commonly tell young people these words to let them know that time is gold and they should be making the

most of it. Teenage years through high school are usually seen with students participating in sport events, dances, and socializing. This scene is only part of the big picture. Looking into individuals sometimes reveals their life is a painful battle overflowing with mixed messages and conflicting demands from parents, teachers, friends, and even themselves (Garfinkel, Hoberman, Parsons, & Walker, 1986). Growing up and learning to be independent from others is a hard job. Relying on oneself to find a path to success and self-fulfillment creates stress. The stress created can lead to serious depression, overwhelming to young people who have never been in a situation that requires communication and problem solving. As a situation like this usually takes time to develop, friends, family, and loved ones can prevent depression from taking over teenage victims, but can't this socialization also lead to stress and eventually depression?

Factors associated with depression

Depression and stress have many factors often associated with antisocial and bad behavior such as suicide and solitude. Characterized feelings of tension, frustration, worry and sadness define stress. These feelings of emotion can usually last from a few hours to days (Walker, 1985).

Overcoming stress can already be a hard task for some young people, but what about the more severe and longer lasting condition – depression? In a study of high school students in Minnesota, 47 common life events were presented. The students were instructed to point out the experiences they had in the past six months which they considered to be “ bad.” Based on their responses, an average of two “ bad” life events per pupil were

experienced in the last six months. The most common negative life events of these were:

Break up with boy/girl friend

Increased arguments with parents

Trouble with brother or sister

Increased arguments between parents

Change in parents' financial status

Serious illness or injury of family member

Trouble with classmates

Trouble with parents

(Garfinkel et al., 1986).

Many young teens suffer from much more reasons to why they become stressed. As teenagers cope and overcome their battle with stress, they soon learn how to solve these problems. They usually learn at their own rate and recover from their struggle over time when they get to know their own weaknesses and strengths. Even though this learning process can be self-attained, it is critical for parents and helping adults to be consciously aware that sometimes stress factors can accumulate and overwhelm vulnerable individuals who seem to be able to handle it on their own.

Family history can create an overview to why certain teens have vulnerabilities to stress. Psychosocial abuse patterns within the family can be factors that contribute to stress related problems in the household. Patterns such as childhood neglect or abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual), socioeconomic deprivations, and loss of loved ones (Bhatia, S. K., 2007; Bhatia, S. C., 2010). These events that may be seen a few times a month or even everyday, will always contribute to teen stress.

Personality traits that change greatly also demand attention because this usually signals trouble. Antisocial behavior such as preferring solitude rather than being accompanied by friends, can lead to stress related depression. Lastly, psychological and social events also accumulate to the problems teens may face. An unexpected pregnancy is common among many female teenagers who are burdened with depression. Such life events all contribute to the growing list of stress inducing factors like social rejection, humiliation and frustration.

Teens find outlets to help move on

As teens grow maturely in the world they face, being independent is a characteristic that teens take seriously. Stress and depression in teens all develop in their own way. Some teens may have a disturbing family history as a factor to their stress related experiences while others have negative social impacts that contribute to their depression. With the independent characteristic teens have, they will all respond to stress and depression differently. Some may find an outlet to relieve their struggles and be able to move on, such as socialization. This association with others can provide teens with necessary skills that will help them in their everyday life, such as

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trusting another person. Practicing on problem solving can help teens learn to deal with everyday conflicts that can get them through any immediate problems. Communication skills also play a big role by allowing troubled teens to vent emotions and express feelings towards their conflicts.

The relationships made in socializing play an important role in dealing with depression. Relationships between friends may be shorter than of family, but being “close” to others is an essential factor in decreasing the chances of depression (Giordano, 2003). These friendships may change over time, especially during the short years of high school. Even though it may not last as long as most would want it to, close relationships are vital in supporting a sense of belonging within a group.

Although socialization may be a primary step on preventing stress and depression, social factors may influence the teen negatively. Social groups that teens participate in may cause more stress than expected. For example, a varsity player on a basketball team may be perform well on the court he plays on and within his team, but he may not be doing well with his academic output. When he realizes that more focus should be put into his education or his varsity privileges will be revoked, this will cause stress to develop in other areas such as his parents putting pressure on him, sibling rivalry, and even with himself with self-confidence issues. For some teens, socialization may not be an effective mean of stress prevention. The transition from middle school to high school usually puts teens in overwhelming situations that require socialization. This emphasis on social interaction creates an environment that teens need to consider to fit in and acquire a sense of belonging. Considering that teens must maintain an

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identity creates another source of pressure that induces stress. Teens who are recovering from stress or depression may take time to adapt to new circumstances. They may not be ready for an environment with high levels of interaction. It will always take time for certain individuals to cope with new surroundings and situations. Teens, as such, have tough times because stress and depression may have deprived them of their social abilities for a long period of time. In times like this, communication is key for teens that require help from peers and family.

Stress and depression are a dangerous threat. Many factors can cause these problems, make life difficult, and intimidate teens. This is of great importance to youth because, at this time of their life, they are still in the process of developing the skills to define their self-responsibility and rely on the awareness of their guardians and peers that can be of assistance in prevailing over this threat. Although many solutions and alternatives can prevent stress and depression, guardians or parents can have the biggest impact on the factors that expose teens to depression. These adults should be able to identify warning signs that are most commonly signaled with behavioral, psychological and social events. For instance, persistent sadness, hopelessness, helplessness and social withdraw are common symptoms of depression (Edward, 2009). All these factors pile up and burden teens, but aware adults or parents with adolescent members in the family, may find it easier to cope and deal with stress a lot quicker by being sensitive to where stress and depression accumulate (Walker, 1985).

Communication can make things easier when signals of stress have been identified. This process where information is relayed and received enables

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teens to express how they really feel. When teens have this opportunity to release their emotions, they become vulnerable to feedback given. At this time participants in the conversation should emphasize on positive feedback and provide a feeling of security that it is okay for a teen to be troubled. Acceptance and the feeling of it may reinforce a teen to become more emotionally unstable but, this is a vital step of overcoming stress and depression. Denial may be a trait that some teens portray, but accepting the fact that they are burdened with stress will enable them to identify their source of frustration and find ways to overcome it.

When socialization and other efforts to overcome stress and depression seem to be of no use, there are two more ways to battle it; therapy and medication. Communication therapy is often an initial treatment for mild to moderate cases of depression. Over the course of this therapy, teen depression may reside. If it doesn't, medication may be prescribed. However, antidepressants should only be used as only a part of the overall treatment plan (Smith, 2010). Medication for treating depression is usually chosen by parents who feel it's too late for their teen to be admitted into therapy sessions. Experts in adolescent depression should only prescribe medication to teens with high risks of suicide with constant observation.