

10 Proven and Effective Interventions for Depression in Children and Adolescents

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The iGen (Gen Z) at Risk

Mental health crisis, directly related to the constant internet access, social media and gaming in various forms:

- Depression. Endorse "I am unhappy"
- Suicidal ideation. Following big drops in adolescent suicide rates since early 90's, big rise since 2008
- Anxiety – more likely to say they are anxious

Around 2012 – big rise in statements of loneliness – social media linked to that

Social Media vs In-person Social Time and Unhappiness and 8th graders

- Spending 10+ hours per week on social media = 56% more likely to be unhappy than those who do not
- At 6 hours a week on social media = 47% more likely to be unhappy
- BUT the *opposite* is true of in-person time activities/friends

Loneliness and Depression, Direct Link to Screen Time

- 27% increased rate of depression
- 31% increase in 8th and 10th graders feeling lonely (from 2011 to 2015)
- Youngest teens at highest risk of unhappiness due to social media.
- Visiting social media daily increases the risk to feel lonely and left out

Risk of Suicidal Thoughts or Actions – Direct Correlation to Screen Time

46% more teens killed themselves in 2015 than in 2007. What changed? Smart phones – constant internet access and social media

More than 2 hours screen time a day is a risk factor, 3 hours = high increase rates of suicide risk factors

Currently 34% of teens experience cyberbullying and that increases suicide risk even more than being bullied at school – mostly because there is no escape

Learning Problems, ADHD, and Increased Screen Time (Decreased Reading)

- 75% college students' computer screens open less than 1 minute – rapid shifting does not indicate better multi-tasking, rather lessens concentration/ Changes ability to take in and digest complex information
- Be aware that rapid shifting between media sites, between screen and classroom or social context significantly interferes with the ability to learn new information
- Falling SAT scores by 13 pts so far, poorer reading comprehension

Learning Issues Affect Talk Therapy Too

- Need to keep things short
- Keep somatic experience in mind
- Utilize tools to manage notes
- Utilize online 'trackers' such as Daylio and T2Mood Tracker
- Utilize apps for reminders and focus

1st: See It: Signs of Depression

Symptoms

- Low Mood/ Crying
- Loss of Interest (boring)
- Weight loss or gain
- Fatigue
- Feeling worthless or guilty
- Impaired concentration
- Recurrent thoughts of death, suicide

Disguises:

- Anger
- Focus on Appearance
- Mood Swings
- Differences between home/school

What Are the Depressed Youth Saying?

- I can't do anything right
- Everyone has a better life than me
- This will never get better
- My life is not useful
- I do not enjoy life

What Are They Doing?

- Staying in bed – oversleeping or in bed watching shows on their screens
- Complaints of fatigue, listless and lethargic
- Crying or looking sad – not participating in previously enjoyed activities
- Over- or under- eating
- Not attending to appearance or to responsibilities like school work

The Cognitive Style

- Morbid pessimism
- Deflection
- Hopeless/Helpless (worthless/Inadequate)
- Impaired rationality
- Neural Networks triggered

#2 Find Triggers: Stop the Downward Spiral - Genetic Susceptibility Coupled With:

- Life changes: New School, first year of college, moving
- Academic Pressure to succeed or too much homework (failure)
- Too Much activity or Too many stressors
- Inadequate social skills or unpopularity (sexual identity issues)
- Social rejection (can become bullied)
- Family Issues: divorce, death or sibling occupying parental attention

Connection to Family

- Parents are always going to be part of the mix – reluctant to see it or in denial
- Divorce
- Step-families – the potential for depression to be overlooked or masked with distance/anger/frustration

The Adolescent Mind – Ages 12-24

- Significant Qualities of the Adolescent Brain can be utilized to develop adaptability and flexibility
- Novelty: seeking the stimulation of what is new in outside and inside of self
 - Social engagement of prime importance
 - Increased emotional intensity
 - Creative Exploration: New ability for abstract reasoning causes the questioning of the status of everything. Thus, ability and tendency to think outside of the box is the special gift of adolescence.

Older Adolescents Can Get Stalled = Helpless/Hopeless

- The cultural belief they have their 20's to figure it out – then they compare self to others who are succeeding and
 - get stuck feeling it is too late for success or
 - they feel discouraged, believing they need to complete college when they hate it or enter workforce or relationship
 - at a level of success beyond their ability
- Address expectations directly
- Coaching them about achievement

Relationships Are Significant

- Adolescent trajectory has always included trying and failing in relationships – movies reflected this: mean girls, heartbreak, conflict with parents – but all were interpersonal
- Current dystopian movies reflects isolation and dark view of future
- Current trajectory misses most of the interactions that develop significant knowledge of others (from personal exchanges) = fear of interactions, loss of confidence as well as absence of sense of significance

Neural Networks Affect Depression

- Memory is stored in networks
- Networks connected by affect, time
- Neural constructs affect consequent interpretation of life experience and categorization of memory
- Changing Depression means attention to neural networks

Neural Networks Tap Similar Emotions and Patterns of Thought

- We react to our moods – mood brings back affective or cognitive memory of conditions when mood was created: mood worsens, network enhanced
- Interpretations go to core themes of inadequacy and worthlessness
- A.N.T.S. – Automatic Negative Thoughts — habitual thought patterns reinforce themselves and are elicited by cues

Change Depressed Physiology Build a Healthy Brain: Start with Education

Exercise – (Ratey, Weintraub) Consider impact of high intensity activity/extreme sports (Brymer & Schweitzer) The brain needs protein and vitamins to build neurotransmitters – eat nutritiously. (DesMaisons, Weil) BUT there is NO 1 OR PERFECT FOOD OR DIET OR EXERCISE MODE: Endless internet searching can stall beginning. Teach that every good habit starts small and builds Brain rebuilds during sleep. Pay attention to sleep hygiene and insomnia (Perlis). Try iCBT coach or Sleepio (online CBT for insomnia) or other apps

Learn to Use Your Words

- Ability to express limited by cognitive stage, neuroatypical conditions and practice
- Keep a mood or thought diary – daylio, T2Mood Tracker
- Teach words to link emotion and verbalization
- Discuss somatic condition as an expression

Purposefully Change the Network- “Think with Both Sides of Your Mind” (Chansky)

- Deliberately introduce modulating, corrective, or positive thoughts
- Plan to have better things to do
- Don’t worry until it happens
- Visualize things working out
- Help people give you what you want/need
- Visualize yourself responding resiliently to a situation

Depressive Cognitive Style-
Change the Explanatory Style

- Teach optimism/pessimism concept
- Practice it – look for exception in an explanation of why they are “wrong, bad, never get what they want” or other absolutist phrases
- Teach modifiers like sometimes, often, rarely instead of absolute

“Specificize”

- Move from global to specific

Start Where You Already Are

Getting engaged in treatment goes better when tapping into things that raise interest, optimism, arousal.

Start with recognition of positives of what they are doing already – how they are living, conducting themselves

Intensify their awareness of their positive actions and the benefits of that

Prime the Pump/Start the Train Rolling

- Similar: Start small movement to get movement going that will perpetuate itself.
- What are rewards at different ages?
- Identify and use rewards already in place as reward for completing components of a larger task (e.g., doing homework, helping at home)
- Time tasks that seem big – reality check

Renewal

- What are the sources of renewal for my energy and mind? Am I tapping into them?
- Find and connect with helping resources whether online or at school
- Find an interest that involves other people and plan periods of time to pursue it

Mobilize Your Energy

Mobilizing is critical to intervening on lethargy, which affects all three arenas.

- Confront "I can't."
 - Ask your client simply to say "I won't!" whenever you hear "I can't." Ironically, making the verbal refusal of "I will not" is an act of power, not the helplessness of "I can't." In say "won't" a feeling of control enters in .
- Change "I have to" to "I choose to." (Legitimate) perception of choice to do what is not pleasing increases sense of control

Interrupt Helplessness

Notice Without Judging

- 1) Teach that emotional reactions are your interpretation of a situation or communication
- 2) observe: what is happening in the situation and what sensations are you experiencing?
- 3) suspend judgment of why it is happening
- 4) focus on what possible responses will help you.

Circular Nature of Feelings and Thoughts

- Ave student fill in examples of being activated by a thought or a feeling and looking at how they move in a circle, worsening as they go.
- This is the basis of a CBT intervention to edge between them and get out of the circle

Explore Activation

- EMDR for self-help *Getting Past Your Past* by Francine Shapiro
- *Focusing in Clinical Practice* by Ann Cornell
- Journal Technique:
 - What am I sensing in my body?
 - What is the earliest age I recall these sensations?
 - Can I image myself having these sensations?
 - Is there any similarity between situations?

Focus On Strength: I Do What I Am

What I do changes how I feel about myself
 Opportunities to do what we are good at creates genuine self-esteem.

Depressed clients forget they have strengths and positives.
 Work on this in therapy sessions:

1. Make a list of your best strengths, e.g., Hard worker, honest, kind, creative, disciplined
2. Make a list of opportunities to use your strengths
3. Each day, note: did I use my strengths? How?

Tracking Strengths – example chart

	STRENGTH kindness	STRENGTH discipline	STRENGTH curiosity	STRENGTH loyalty
USED IN	Monday's meeting	Tired: Got work done	Put shelf together	Talk with girlfriend
USED IN				
USED IN				
USED IN				

Pre-Trigger Preparation for Connection

Major goal is to stop the slide to despair with planned-ahead strategies

- Set up obligations that you must attend – feeling needed or necessary counteracts the sense of insignificance
- Ask friends to text or message you at specific times
- Use apps like Mindshift to remind you about your plan

Change Catastrophizing

Notice negative storylines

Change your explanation about why it's happening.

1. Dispute negative and limiting thoughts: What is the evidence?
2. Find alternative causes for bad events.
3. Consider less catastrophic implications "Will this *really* ruin my life?"
4. Plan how to improve the situation.

Notice Positives

Increase Positive Experiences

Access to positive experience is blocked by depression - causes avoidance of contact with positive experience.

First, increase awareness of positive experience Track daily activities very specifically: "Write down what you are doing." Then answer,

- "Is it Pleasurable or Unpleasurable?" (If pleasurable, rate the degree of pleasure)
- Answer, "Did I accomplish something?" (If yes, rate the degree of accomplishment)

Notice what is already working

Pay Attention to Others
Saying/Doing Five Positives

	Comment/ Action	Comment/ Action	Comment/ Action	Comment/ Action	Comment/ Action
Day 1					
Day 2					
Day 3					
Day 4					
Day 5					
Day 6					
Day 7					

Gratitude – A Choice

1. Gratitude journal (Emmons and Lyubomirsky)– 3 blessings a day or each week journaling on the blessings
 - Daily is more effective
2. Daily utilize Gratitude 365 Pro or similar online journal that can be accessed at any time
 - Increases memory of positives
3. This is about seeing a positive in every day

References, Bibliography and Resources for Anxiety and Depression Sessions

For Jack Hirose 2020

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Resources

Options for excellent information obtainable over the Internet abound. They also change frequently; new resources are added at a remarkable pace. Therefore, the lists here are subject to change, but at least they are a place to start:

APPS FOR MOBILE DEVICES •

The Anxiety Depression Association of America (www.adaa.org) provides a review of new mobile apps that you might find helpful.

• An excellent resource from Northwestern University is IntelliCare— a review of mental health apps for all conditions. Their website (<https://intellicare.cb.its.northwestern.edu/>) Here are some apps I like that have been around a while.

Breathing: • Breathe2Relax • MyCalmBeat • Relax Lite

Worry: Stop, Breathe & Think, • MindShift • SamApp • Breathing Bubbles

Meditation: • Calm • Headspace • Simply Being

Sleep: • CBT- i Coach

WEBSITES Several helpful websites contain mental health resources, including those of the major universities and treatment facilities where research and training occur.

National Websites Related to Mental Health:

• Anxiety and Depression Association of America: www.adaa.org

- American Psychiatric Association: www.psychiatry.org
- American Psychological Association: www.apa.org www.Commonsensemedia.org
- National Library of Medicine: www.medlineplus.gov
- National Alliance for the Mentally Ill: www.nami.org
- National Institute of Mental Health: www.nimh.nih.gov
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: www.samhsa.gov
- The website of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine has significant information about sleep disorders: www.aasmnet.org. If you want ideas for sleeping better, consult www.sleepeducation.com, which is sponsored by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine.

GUIDED IMAGERY AND RELAXATION

YouTube provides an endless array of choices for guided meditation and relaxation. I utilized video from www.princeea.com. You can also check out some of the authors who offer guided meditation: Barbara Frederickson (www.pursuit-of-happiness.org), Jon Kabat-Zinn (JKZ Series of Apps for Meditation in your Apps store), Kristin Neff (www.self-compassion.org), Daniel Siegel (www.drdansiegel.com) and www.tarabrach.com