

Helping Children with Depression

Hello everyone. My name is _____ and I'm part of the global 1for50 movement. We desire to equip people like you to reach, disciple and empower the next generation.

Lately, nine-year-old Sarah has been easily irritated, withdrawing from close friends and avoiding spending time with family. Sometimes she refuses to eat and other times she eats so much she makes herself feel sick. Sarah is having a hard time concentrating in school, takes naps often, and says she does not want to do anything because nothing matters. Each of these symptoms on their own are not cause for alarm, but Sarah's mom is concerned she is feeling depressed.

Depression does not only affect adults and teens. It can also affect children. What is depression? ¹Depression is a treatable illness that can look like sadness, but it gets in the way of everyday life. It can cause a decreased desire to connect with friends and family members.

Depression can be caused by life events, family history or genetic vulnerability, environment, or inadequate physical health. It can also be caused by feeling unsupported or unloved which makes the child become hopeless.

What can we do to help children who are suffering from depression? The first and most important thing to do is to pray for the child. The Bible also gives us good advice on how to help our children. Psalm 42:11 says, "Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God."

Talking about thoughts and feelings with children who are feeling hopeless can help give them a fresh perspective. We can help our children process their sadness by helping them say out loud what they are feeling. Instead of impatiently telling our children to "get over it" or "pull out of it," we can empower them by helping them identify reasons to put their hope and trust in God to get them through this time and giving them ideas of things to praise and thank Him for (like sunshine, flowers, family, church, music, and friends). We can help them start a gratitude prayer journal to help them think about things that honor God (Philippians 4:8). A sample gratitude journal page is included with the script for this video on the 1for50Today.net website.

A good coping skill is to help depressed children get their minds off themselves and serve others. Often when children spend time with other people who have less than them, the depressed children see how much they have and how much they are loved.

Serving with our time and energy is a gift we can give back to God. It can bring joy to our hearts to give gifts to God and other people.

Creating art and writing or journaling thoughts and feelings can also be healthy coping skills. Singing, playing, dancing, and taking a walk where there are new things to see can often lighten a child's heavy heart.

When children are having a hard time communicating why they feel depressed and cannot seem to get over feeling sad, talking to a professional Christian counselor can be helpful. The counselor will give children who struggle with depression more coping skills for dealing with extremely sad feelings. Talking to a counselor is not a sign of weakness, but of strength and courage. God is our Wonderful Counselor (*Isaiah 9:6*) and will lead us to other wise counselors to help our children have healthy and clear minds.

Thanks for joining me. For more resources to help you reach, disciple, and empower your children, go to our website www.1for50today.net.

NOTE

You are welcome to translate this video. Please send the translated scripts and videos to 1for50@gmail.com so they can be posted to our YouTube channel.

SOURCES

¹WebMD Medical Reference, Reviewed by Renee A. Alli, MD on June 07, 2020 © 2020 WebMD, LLC. All rights reserved.

Secular research also supports how gratitude helps to combat depression. Check out this website for more ideas for expressing gratitude:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/two-takes-depression/201211/how-gratitude-combats-depression>.