

Youth Depression

Introduction

Youth depression is a serious problem that affects numerous young people today. Many people overlook youth depression and think that only adults can have this illness. When in reality many young children are sitting in silence when they actually need help. I chose to study youth depression because I know that it can be a very serious problem, but with knowledge about this subject we can get help to the people who need it. I also wanted to study youth depression because in high school I knew someone who was so depressed that she committed suicide, and I always wonder if she got the right help maybe we could have saved her. In recent years, the number of depressed children has been increasing, which is very concerning, especially since there's a number of factors that cause depression. Many scientists think that there is some type of genetic link to depression. I think if we can find a link to our genes and being depressed we will be able to better treat those who are affected. Everyone has ups and downs in their lives, but some seem to always be having a bad day. It's very hard to diagnose depression, especially in children, but I think the more we know about this illness the more we will be able to help those who need it.

Section 1: Background and Problem Statement

- **Web site #1 Name: Healthy People 2020**
- **Web address:**
<http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topicsobjectives2020/overview.aspx?topicid=2>
- **Background Information:**
The behavioral patterns that are established in early childhood affect us later in life. The behavioral patterns established during the developmental period help determine young people's current health status and their risk for developing chronic diseases in adulthood. There are many health problems that can occur during this time period like suicide, homicide, and substance abuse. Adolescent health is important because there are many chemical biological changes that are happening in a child's body.
- **Web site #2 Name: Suicide Awareness Voices of Education**
- **Web address:**
http://www.save.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.viewPage&page_ID=7059F90B-018E-8AE4-A6C45D036A17D4F4
- **Background Information:**
Suicidal children can have youth depression along with other mental illnesses like anxiety disorder, attention deficit disorder, and bipolar disorder. Depression in children is very complex because each child's biological makeup, environment, and personality are different, making it hard to identify children who are at risk. Children who say things like 'I'm going to run away', 'I'm going to kill myself', 'I wish I were dead', 'My parents won't even miss me', and 'The voices tell me to kill myself' are showing signs of depression. Also, children who do things like talk or joke about suicide, give away prized possessions, have high risk behaviors, obsession with guns or knives, and previous suicide attempts are showing serious

signs of depression and are reaching out for help. Very high risk children will show characteristics of being interested with death, and thinking that you go to a better place when you die. Many suicidal children will have parents who have attempted or committed suicide. There are many ways that you can help children who are depressed. Education about depression is the first step everyone needs to take, along with classes, sometimes medicine, support groups and programs children who are clinically depressed can show improvements.

- **Web site #3 Name: The Relationship of Self-Esteem and Depression**

- **Web address:** <http://www.brains.org/depression.htm>

- **Background Information:**

Until recently children were not considered able to be depressed, this is mostly because of Freudian notions about the unconscious and because depression was viewed as a condition that could only affect adults. Views and opinions about youth depression began to change in the 1970s when adolescent behaviors were thought to be masks of depression. Youth depression can be hard to diagnose. Many times it is confused with attention deficit disorder, aggression and hyper activity. Youth depression is usually accompanied by other ailments like digestive problems, sleep problems, and constant boredom. Causes of depression are almost as numerous as the symptoms of depression. Family history of depression can lead to depression at a young age; low self-esteem has also been linked as one of the causes of youth depression. This is because many children have the lowest self-esteem as they are transitioning from middle school to high school, which could be due to the inability to adapt to new situations. But during this time period is also when young teens are most likely to have feelings of depression. Other factors that are associated with youth depression is difficulty establishing autonomy with one's parents, history of sexual abuse, and difficulty establishing one's own identity.

Section 2: Research

- **Web site #1 Name: Teen Depression Research Study**

- **Web address:** http://pediatrics.about.com/cs/mentalhealth/a/depression_stdy.htm

- **Summary of the research:**

This study looked at a large number of adolescents in the United States and discovered that 2.5% of children and 8.3% of adolescents suffer from depression. This study also discovered that depression is occurring in younger and younger children. Also, if depression occurs at a young age it is more likely that depression will re-occur or worsen later in life. This research study is very beneficial because it shows that depression is now occurring in very young children, not just adults. It also shows how being depressed at a young age can affect you later in life.

- **Web site #2 Name: Research on Depression**

- **Web address:** <http://psychcentral.com/disorders/depressionresearch.htm>

- **Summary of the research:**
Recent research has shown that there could be a link to depression and genes. Multiple gene variants, acting together with yet unknown environmental risk factors or developmental events, account for the expression of depression. Identifying these specific genes is very difficult, but with new technology scientists are making advances in discovering what exactly causes depression. If there is a certain gene that is linked to depression it will make it easier to screen for depression, treat depression, and prevent depression. By knowing what causes depression scientists and doctors will be able to reduce the number of people becoming depressed.
- **Web site #3 Name: Research on Teen Depression and Suicide**
- **Web address:** <http://www.teenscreen.org/learn/adolescent-depression-suicide>
- **Summary of the research:**
Through recent research it has been discovered that about 8% of 12-17 year olds experience or have problems with depression. But only 39% of them get the treatment that they need. Complications of untreated depression can include things like missing school, emotional distress, strained relationships, withdrawal from peers, and increased chance of smoking or drinking. All of these complications can have a negative effect of an adolescent's life. Many young children and teenagers have difficulty seeking help for their depression, but by not getting help their depression is just getting worse.

Section 3: Statistics

- **Web site #1 Name: Teen Depression**
- **Web address:** <http://www.teendepression.org/stats/teenage-depression-statistics/>
- **Summary of the statistics:**
Teen and youth depression doesn't discriminate against race, gender, social background or income level. Anyone at anytime can be affected. About 20% of teens will experience depression before the age of 20. This shows that depression is widespread, it can affect anyone. Teenage and young girls are more likely to be depressed, but boys are more likely not to seek help for their depression. Many of the statistics show that the number of depressed youth is increasing, and many young people still do not get help for their symptoms. Less than 33% of depressed teens will get the help that they need. Many think that if they don't get help their problems will just go away, but by ignoring your thoughts and feelings your depression will just get worse.
- **Web site #2 Name: National Institute of Mental Health**
- **Web address:** <http://www.mentalhealth.gov/health/publications/suicide-in-the-us-statistics-and-prevention/index.shtml>
- **Summary of the statistics:**
Suicide is most common among 20-24 year olds; however the number of suicides in 15-19 year olds is increasing. Along with the increase in suicide and suicide attempts there has also been an increase in depression. Depression is one of the biggest risk

factors of suicide; more than 90% of those who die from suicide had shown symptoms of depression. By getting help and treatment for depression the number of suicides and suicide attempts will hopefully decrease.

- **Web site #3: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**

- **Web address:**

http://www.afsp.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.viewpage&page_id=050fea9f-b064-4092-b1135c3a70de1fda

- **Summary of the statistics:**

In children ages 10-14 the suicide rate has doubled in the past two decades. Risk factors for suicide include suicidal thoughts, psychiatric disorders (such as depression, impulsive aggressive behavior, bipolar disorder, and certain anxiety disorders), drug and alcohol abuse and previous suicide attempts, with the risk increased if there is situational stress and access to firearms. By limiting factors such as drug and alcohol abuse and by getting those the help they need we will be able to decrease the number of depressed children in America.

Section 4: Consumer Information

- **Web site #1 Name: Adolescent Depression**

- **Web address:** <http://www.childstats.gov/americaschildren/health4.asp>

- **Summary of the information:**

From 2004 to 2007, the prevalence of MDE among youth was more than twice as high among females (12 percent to 13 percent) as among males (4 percent to 5 percent). As the prevalence of depression increases among children more will be known about the causes and risk factors. As we study more about this illness it will become clear why girls are more likely to be depressed than boys at a younger age. Many scientists think that depression in children and teenagers has to do with self-esteem issues. This is because during this time period children have to adapt to new schools, friends, and problems. How adolescents adjust to their new environments could have a big influence on whether or not they become depressed.

- **Web site #2 Name: Teen Depression**

- **Web address:** <http://www.teendepression.org/stats/teenage-depression-statistics/>

- **Summary of the information:**

About 20% of teens will experience depression before they reach adulthood. Many of these teens will not receive the help that they need. Also, between 10 and 15 percent of teens will have symptoms of teen depression at any one time. A small percentage of teens will also suffer from seasonal depression. Seasonal depression is when one becomes more depressed during the winter months. Seasonal depression is not considered as severe as regular depression because it comes and goes during the year. However if one does experience seasonal depression there are ways that you can get help. By talking to doctors and taking up outside activities during the winter you can help decrease your chance of becoming depressed during the winter months.

- **Web site #3 Name: Teen Health**
- **Web address:** http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/mental_health/depression.html
- **Summary of the information:**
Many times depression can cause physical problems, like headaches, digestive problems, and other stress related symptoms. Usually at this point a depressed child will go see the doctor. But even well-educated doctors will sometimes misdiagnose a child with depression. Because there is no single cause to depression it can make it hard to recognize. Patients will also express depression differently, some will have more physical signs than others; some will have more good days than others. Certain medical conditions can affect hormone balance and therefore have an effect on mood as well. Some conditions, such as hypothyroidism, are known to cause a depressed mood in some people.

Section 5: Solutions to the Problem (or Issue)

- **Web site #1 Name: Family First Aid: Help for Troubled Teens**
- **Web address:** <http://www.familyfirstaid.org/depression.html>
- **Summary of the information:**
Family First Aid is an organization that helps troubled teens. They also conduct research to help explain why more and more teens are becoming depressed. This organization has worked to identify warning signs of depression. Some of these warning signs include sadness, low self-esteem, substance abuse, spending more time alone, decreased desire to do things, problems in school, not caring about their appearance, and running away from home. Everyone is at risk of becoming depressed, but females are twice as likely as males. There are many treatment options for depression. Some include medicine, individual therapy, and group therapy.
- **Web site #2 Name: Teen Depression**
- **Web address:** http://helpguide.org/mental/depression_teen.htm
- **Summary of the information:**
This Web site gives advice on ways to talk to teen that are depressed or at risk of becoming depressed. The first thing that you should do if you suspect someone is depressed is talk to them. If you ignore the symptoms they will not go away, only get worse. Next you should offer support, let them know that you are there for them. Be gentle and persistent, at first a depressed child will try to shut you out, but be persistent in talking to them. Listen without lecturing. Don't criticize or pass judgment on someone who is depressed and expressing their feelings. Validate a depressed teens feeling, don't try to talk them out of being depressed. These tips will help teens and adolescents talk about their feelings and allow them to get the help that they need.
- **Web site #3 Name: Depression**
- **Web address:** <http://www.headspace.org.au/default.aspx?page=151>
- **Summary of the information:**

Depression is an illness that we still have a lot to learn about. But one way to help yourself if you are feeling depressed is eating healthy and exercising. Practicing relaxation and writing down your feelings can also help you to learn to deal with them. Reducing stress and avoiding alcohol and drugs can also help improve your mood and feelings. Seeking professional help can also be very beneficial. Most people recover quicker when they get help from a doctor or someone who knows how to handle depression. Cognitive Behavior Therapy has been proven to be one of the most effective treatments of depression. Cognitive Behavior Therapy is based on the idea that emotions and feelings and thoughts are related and it explores how thinking methods can affect our emotions.

Conclusions

After researching youth depression I learned a lot. I had no idea that so many young people were at risk, or already have depression. I didn't realize that children so young were being diagnosed with depression. This still makes me wonder why children are so depressed; are there societal and environmental factors? Or is it all in our genes, but if it is in our genes does that mean that some of us are destined to become depressed? I think that it is a mixture of everything around us. Our genes, environments, society, family, and friends all play a role in how we feel. In recent years many advances have been made with research and recognition of depression. It is now known as an illness and it is known that children can become depressed, too. Doing this project was very beneficial because it made me aware of the risk factors and symptoms of depression. I will now be able to recognize one of my friends if they are at risk of depression. I also am now aware of how to talk to that person and how to treat that person to help them. I also learned ways to myself from becoming depressed. By exercising, eating right, avoiding alcohol and surrounding myself with good friends I will be less likely to become depressed.

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