



Calgary Counselling Centre

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NEWS RELEASE—CALGARY COUNSELLING CENTRE

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For Immediate Release

Calgary Counselling Centre Launches Group Program to Address Growing Issue of Teen Depression

CALGARY—Calgary Counselling Centre will launch its new group program for teens struggling to deal with depression sometime this spring. The program, called Adolescent Depression, has the specific objective of helping Calgary teens, and their families manage and overcome depression.

“As our community continues to grow and become more complex and diverse, so do the challenges for many of our young people, which can lead to depression, anxiety and feeling completely overwhelmed” says Dr. Patrick Keelan, a Registered Psychologist at Calgary Counselling Centre.

In fact, several large-scale studies have shown that clinical depression among teenagers affects up to 3% of the general high school population at any one point in time. By age 18, up to 20% of all teenagers have had at least one episode of clinical depression. These rates make depression the most frequently reported mental health problem for this age group. Associated with an increase in adolescent depression rates are increases in the number of teenage suicides as well as drug and alcohol abuse.

Calgary Counselling Centre’s Adolescent Depression program uses a format designed by Drs. Gregory Clarke, Peter Lewinsohn and Hyman Hops of the Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Research in Portland, Oregon. Research has demonstrated that more than 70% of the adolescents who participated in their program were significantly improved one month after the group ended and that these gains were maintained 12 months later.

“Our treatment program at Calgary Counselling Centre uses the group format to help adolescents cope with depression by developing tools that promote relaxation, positive thinking, social skills, communication and problem solving,” says Dr. Keelan. “Our program is also unique in that it requires at least one parent to participate in a concurrent group for parents who will learn to support the changes their teen is making.”

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Backgrounder, Adolescent Depression—Calgary Counselling Centre

Depression is one of the most common and difficult personal issues an adult can face. Reports on how medication and counselling help adults with this issue appear regularly in the media. The beneficial result of this media coverage is that adults increasingly seek help for depression.

It is encouraging that the public recognizes depression in adults as a serious problem for which people can seek professional help. The same cannot be said for depression suffered by another major group in our society: teenagers. Although there is still relatively little public awareness of depression in teens, researchers and those who work in helping professions understand it is a problem that affects a large number of teens.

Being a teen isn't easy. There are major life-changes to deal with, increased levels of stress, and an unpredictable future to think about. And while depressive behaviour is often written off by adults as simple "teenage angst", we know that depression in adolescence significantly increases the potential for suicide, and can lead to many problems in adulthood, such as: increased likelihood of suicide, relationship problems and, addiction issues.

How Widespread is Teen Depression?

Research indicates that depression is a significant problem affecting increasing numbers of teens. Several large-scale studies have shown that clinical depression among teenagers affects up to 3% of the general high school population at any one point in time. By age 18, up to 20% of all teenagers have had at least one episode of clinical depression. These rates make depression the most frequently reported mental health problem for this age group. Associated with an increase in teenage depression rates are increases in the number of teenage suicides as well as drug and alcohol abuse.

How do you know if Your Teen has Depression?

Many things in your teen's life—personal problems, stressful life events, physiological imbalances, can trigger teen depression. However, teen depression manifests in specific ways that can be observed and as such acted upon. Being aware of some of the key signs of depression in teens will make it easier for you to help a teenager you know who is suffering from depression. Some of these signs are: (1) Teens with depression participate in fewer pleasant activities compared with nondepressed teens; (2) Teens with depression think about and talk about suicide more than nondepressed teens; (3) Teens with depression tend to have poorer academic achievement than nondepressed teens; (4) Teens with depression tend to have more negative ways of thinking compared with nondepressed teens. These negative ways of thinking include negative thoughts about themselves (low self-esteem), negative ways of thinking which lead them to overreact emotionally to negative events and blame themselves for negative events they did not cause; (5) Teens with depression tend to isolate themselves from friends and family, making it difficult for parents to gauge whether their teen is depressed.

If a teenager you know shows one or more of these signs, they may benefit from some help. If you suspect that they may be considering a suicide attempt, try to get them help as soon as possible. A caring adult can make an exceptional difference, as can professional counselling.

What Help is Available?

Individual and group counselling can help teens to learn effective ways to reduce their depression. In counselling, they learn strategies to address the key signs of depression mentioned in the previous section. For example, counselling can help teens to set goals to increase the number of pleasant

activities in their lives, change negative thinking patterns which affect their mood, learn strategies to cope with negative life events, and learn communication skills which help them to reduce and manage conflicts in relationships

Some group programs, such as those available at Calgary Counselling Centre require parental participation so parents are better equipped to support and reinforce the changes their teens are making in reducing their depression. Teens and their parents attend separate groups on the same evening each week. The separate parent and teen groups help reduce the level of conflict between parents and teens by teaching both groups effective communication and problem-solving skills. Later group sessions involve the joint participation of the teens and their parents to practice these skills.

For more information about Calgary Counselling Center's individual and group counselling programs for teens, please call 265-4980, or visit our Website at www.calgarycounselling.com.

Calgary Counselling Centre has no waitlist and operates on a sliding fee scale that is adjusted to annual family income.

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