

REDUCING THE STIGMA

It is a myth that your depressed child can “pull himself up by his bootstraps.” Your son or daughter needs effective treatment that combines anti-depressant medication with talk therapy.

If your child had diabetes, you would seek medical care to help her. And, you would find a qualified therapist for a child with a speech disorder.

Physical illnesses such as depression and other mood disorders that affect the brain also can be treated by professionals. No amount of “pulling oneself up by the boot straps” will repair the faulty wiring of the brain. Children who get treatment become healthy.

Depression is a treatable illness. Your child need not suffer. Treatment for depression saves lives.



The Parent to Parent Network (P2PN) is a nonprofit, 501(C)(3), organization helping schools, organizations and communities educate parents on critical issues impacting the health, safety and well-being of children and teens throughout Northeast Ohio. A comprehensive information resource and support system, the network represents affiliate organizations in more than 25 area communities working to help parents understand the risks facing today’s children and their need for guidance to make healthier choices.



Suicide Prevention Education Alliance of Northeast Ohio (SPEA) works to prevent suicide and promote recognition of adolescent depression through its education and community partner alliances. SPEA has delivered its proven program, Recognizing Adolescent Depression and Suicide Prevention, to 55,000 students in 77 Northeast Ohio schools. SPEA’s objective is to cause at-risk students to receive treatment from mental health professionals. With treatment, young lives are saved, according to the agency’s evidence-based evaluation.

For more information on risky youth behavior and parent programs in your area:



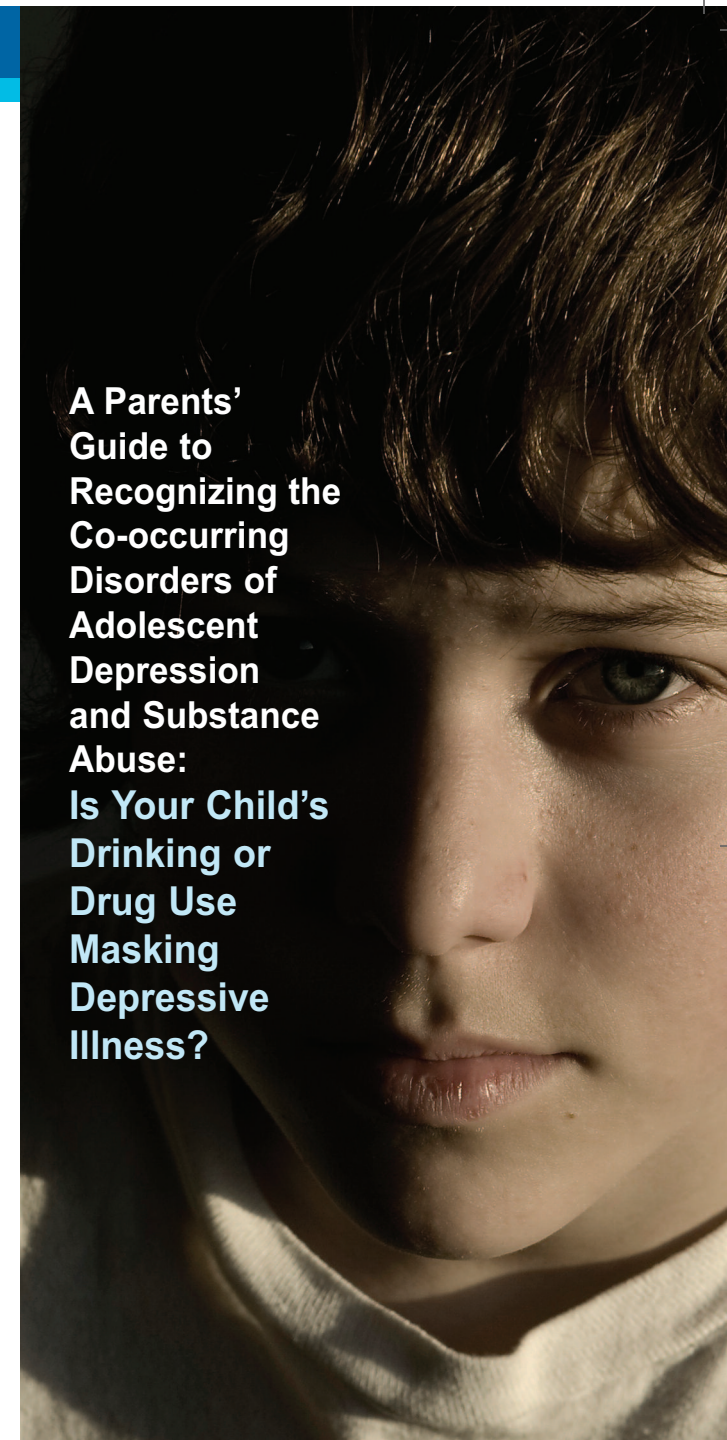
P.O. Box 450738
Cleveland, OH 44145
440.666.8234
P2PN@Parent2ParentNetwork.org
www.Parent2ParentNetwork.org

For more information on suicide prevention or to schedule a speaker:



29425 Chagrin Blvd., Ste. 306
Cleveland, OH 44122-4637
216.464.3471
www.helppreventsuicide.org

A Parents’ Guide to Recognizing the Co-occurring Disorders of Adolescent Depression and Substance Abuse: Is Your Child’s Drinking or Drug Use Masking Depressive Illness?



ADOLESCENT DEPRESSION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

For most teens, the transition from child to adult is exciting, rocky and awkward. Risk taking is a natural part of youth development. And, while most of our children survive the teen years relatively unscathed, there are some who make negative choices that permanently affect their future.

It is difficult to recognize if your child is suffering from depression and using drugs and alcohol to self-medicate. The National Alliance on Mental Illness reports that one out of every five children suffers from some form of mental illness, most often depression. When our children hurt, they want something to make them feel better and their search could lead to drugs and alcohol.

But, use of alcohol and drugs will not end the pain of depression and left untreated, your child's illness can worsen. Studies show the earlier our children use substances to medicate themselves, the more likely they are to become addicted. This combination of chemical dependency and major depression is referred to as "co-occurring disorders."



PARENTS SHOULD KNOW:

Parents need to protect their child's mental health as vigorously as they do their physical health. While depression can occur at any time, it happens most commonly during adolescence. And although half of all lifetime mental illness cases begin by age 14, only 20 percent of depressed children are treated by a professional. Left untreated, depression is likely to reoccur and become progressively more severe.

Use of chemicals may be linked to your child's depression. To distinguish between normal teenage angst and behaviors alerting you to a more serious problem, watch for the following symptoms of depression—

- Persistent sadness or anxiety
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities
- Decline in school performance
- Feelings of hopelessness or desperation
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness or shame
- Change in sleeping patterns
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Decreased energy and fatigue
- Restlessness and irritability or increased anger
- Inability to concentrate or make decisions
- Increased alcohol and/or drug use
- Thoughts of suicide or wishing to be dead

Parents whose children have five or more of these symptoms lasting at least two weeks should have them assessed by a mental health professional to determine if they have a depressive illness.

SERIOUS RISKS

Co-occurring disorders are grave and often lead teens to consider suicide. During the despair and suffering of depression, many teens seriously consider ending their young lives. When they add alcohol or drugs to the mix, all too often the results are life-altering and even fatal.

Studies indicate that alcohol and drug abuse are second only to depression and other mood disorders as the most frequent risk factors for suicide.

Statistics gathered show—

- 20 percent of teens seriously consider suicide
- 14 percent of teens have made a suicide plan
- 8 percent of teens make a suicide attempt
- 70 percent of youth who make a suicide attempt are frequent alcohol and/or drug users
- Binge drinking significantly increases suicidal ideation, planning and attempts



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Most teen depression that precedes a suicide attempt is both recognizable and treatable. To prevent tragic deaths, parents should—

- Find out why your child is drinking or using drugs
- Review the symptoms of depression and determine if your child has five or more of them lasting at least two weeks
- If depression is suspected, have your child assessed by a mental health professional
- If depression is diagnosed, monitor your son or daughter's treatment to ensure compliance with the prescribed therapy
- If your child is chemically dependent, seek rehabilitation in a facility offering expertise in the treatment of co-occurring disorders