

### **Week #3 Mental Health Tidbit for May**

Following the abrupt changes to our lives in the wake of the Covid19 crisis, you may have noticed your children experiencing sadness, grief, anger, and irritability. Feeling down in this time of inactivity, social isolation, and uncertainty is to be expected. However, as time has gone on, most of us have adjusted and settled in to the “new normal,” as everyone is calling it. But some of our children have become stuck in a negative mood, feeling hopeless and unable to enjoy anything and bounce back. Loneliness and lack of social support are risk factors for depression, and many children have not been able to be as socially connected as they normally are during this pandemic. How can you tell if your child is truly depressed? Here are some of the signs and symptoms of depression:

- Unusual sadness or irritability
- Loss of interest in activities they once enjoyed
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Shifts in sleep patterns
- Social withdrawal, even from online opportunities
- Self-criticism, feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness
- Negative thinking—being unable to look at the bright side
- Thoughts of suicide

If your child seems depressed, there are some steps you can take:

- If the situation is urgent, contact a mental health professional or call 1-800-273-TALK
- Encourage your child to talk about their feelings
- Help your child learn to replace negative thoughts with truthful, helpful thoughts
- Adopt healthy practices regarding sleep, exercise and eating
- Make sure to schedule enjoyable activities every day, which may require creativity since some of the usual options are off the table due to social distancing
- Help your child learn to focus on gratitude by listing and reflecting daily on at list 3 things they are grateful for
- Practice kindness by having your child think of things to do for others in need, such as sending cards or letters to the sick or elderly, or helping a neighbor with yardwork
- If you or your child need to talk with someone, you can contact your school psychologist or guidance counselor

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