

Depression and Behavioural Difficulties in Children

Possible Signs of Depression

- Frequent sadness or irritability
- Bouts of crying for no clear reason
- Social withdrawal
- Low motivation
- Low self-esteem
- Poor appetite
- Difficulty sleeping
- Suicidal/self-harm thoughts or actions

Tips for Parents

- Find the right moment to talk to your child about the changes you see in their mood and behaviour (e.g., a quick conversation in the car or at bedtime may encourage kids to open up).
- When discussing problems in your child's life, be sure to listen and empathize first (no matter how seemingly minor the issue), then help them to come up with realistic solutions.

Possible Signs of Behavioural Issues

- Impulsivity or reckless behaviour
- Defiance or excessive arguing
- Aggression or fighting
- Disrespect or problems with authority

When any of these behaviours persist for *more than a couple of weeks*, they can have a significant negative impact on relationships, school performance, and self-esteem.

Tips for Parents

- Notice which situations and environments trigger challenging behaviour, as this will provide some clues of what may need to change.
- When your child is calm, talk about the behaviours with the goal of understanding what triggers them and helping them come up with alternative coping strategies.
- Remember that your child does not enjoy getting in trouble; they just don't know how to control the behaviour right now for some reason.

If any of the above problems persist or cause your child significant distress, consult with school staff, your family physician or a psychologist.

For more information, helpful resources, and access to professional help, visit our website:

www.mindfullivingcentre.ca

