


The Epidemic of Teenage Depression and Anxiety: What Teens Really Need

December 1, 2018  14

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Our society has an epidemic of teenagers experiencing depression and anxiety; ultimately leading to substance abuse in an effort to self-medicate. The symptoms for depression and anxiety in teenagers can vary. Some teens demonstrate their distress by withdrawing in isolation, having angry outbursts, stealing, defying the household rules, while other distressed teens might throw themselves in their schoolwork, bully their siblings, excel in sports, or have a very active social life. There is no cookie-cutter profile for a depressed teen, which makes it even more difficult to label and realize that there is even a problem. Parents typically feel helpless and stressed as they try to talk to their children and steer them in the right direction. Most parents (and some mental health care providers) are not aware of what these teens need most.



From a biological perspective, researchers have found that the brains of teenagers are going through a massive transformation. As one part of the brain grows, it becomes out of harmony with the other parts that have not yet developed. And this goes on and on until all parts of the brain have developed equally so that the neurological wiring connects and flows. Massive neuroplasticity is taking place during this process. While this happens, the teen experiences utter confusion, mood irregularities, and emotional dysregulation. Decision making and choices are faulty, at best. Personality is shattered. This makes it very difficult for them to figure out who they are.

In addition to the neurological disharmony, teenagers are also going through the spiritual quest for an authentic identity. This is an innate need that must be developed for both psychological and emotional tranquility. They need to know who they are and what they are here for. Especially the teens that were born after 1990 and have demonstrated a more advanced brain capacity than ever before. We know this from the 3-year old that can play Mozart without practice. What isn't realized is that many other children may not be playing Mozart, but MRIs would indicate that they have similar advanced brains. These kids came here on purpose and for a major task of uplifting the vibration and consciousness here on Earth. Their desire to maintain the truth of who they are is unrelenting. Of course, they are not going to fit into the 'one size fits all' systems. This often perpetuates depression and anxiety.

Others understand that these 'new children' born over the past 20 years actually come into this world with a higher degree of knowing and connection to spiritual aspects of life, necessary for them to fulfill their life's missions. They find it difficult to adjust to a three-dimensional world as they live in a higher dimensional body and mind. Many are Highly Sensitive People (HSP) and incredibly empathic, (EMPATHS) feeling the emotions of everyone around them.

Jeanette Folan wrote the *Diary of a Teenage Empath* along with an accompanying online workbook (<http://empathdiary.com/workbook>) providing exceptional research-based tools to help teenagers cope with their sensory overloads. In an effort to educate, these virtual workbook sessions are being offered to school systems as after-school programs. In many cases, this re-conception totally changes the child's self-image and can prevent major psychological distress and potentially even suicide or homicide.

Most professionals address this massive epidemic by encouraging and teaching teens new behaviors and thought patterns. And this is helpful, however often not enough to create sustainable change. The problem is much deeper than thoughts and behaviors. For example, they focus on helping them develop self-esteem, however what teens need is a sense of self, before they can develop self-esteem. The teen needs his/her authentic identity and is NOT willing to mask it to fit in. Keeping in mind that identity involves much more than what the teen should do for a living when he/she grows up. But rather embarks on topics related to morality, integrity, sexuality, undisclosed talents and desires, personality styles, the truth of their soul, and an authentic view of themselves and their world.

Many practitioners overlook the fact that the most effective way to help a distressed teen is to guide them to their authentic identity. Depressed teens are struggling to remember who they are and why they came here. What is most ironic, is that the teens themselves are not aware that this is what they are struggling with. Many parents are so distressed and scared of their teens' behaviors, the last thing on their mind is to help them develop their identity. They are more worried about being considered a 'bad parent'. To muddy the waters even more, when parents watch their children struggle through this challenging time of their lives, it brings up unresolved pain and issues from their own adolescence that make it even harder to stay calm, stay connected, maintain empathy and hold unconditional parental love and guidance for their teen. But if they can master this, they can break the generational patterns of this family dynamic, making life so much easier for those coming after them in the next generations of their family line.

Integrative Health Coaches (IHC) have been trained in techniques used to facilitate the process of bringing the teen to full identity development and exposure as they are going through radical brain changes. First, IHCs use motivational interviewing to help the teen open up and feel secure in the truth of what they are speaking. IHCs pay special attention to what the teen is NOT saying as this can be an indication of a crucial part of their identity that they are avoiding or not integrating. They might use carefully worded questions about what the teen liked to do between the ages of six and nine years old before they were 'socialized out of these desires'. Were they nature oriented, intrigued with people, did they like to draw, make things with clay, fix engines, drawn to music, have an affinity for animals, see spirits, etc?

They pay attention to subtle emotional changes, both with the teen and with what they themselves are experiencing during coaching sessions. This gives them the added information they need to help the teen get a clearer picture of truth. They hold a neutral space so that insights and 'aha' moments can be generated.

These are just a few of the strategies that the IHCs use with teenagers until gradually the teen is able to put the pieces together in remembrance of who they are on all levels; mind, body, and spirit. Through this accomplishment, depression and anxiety often subsides, decreasing the need to self-medicate and/or do harm to self or others.

Dr. Nickerson's Certified Integrative Health Coach Training Program is a one-of-a-kind holistic mental health care training program that can be used as a stand-alone mental health certification or as an expansion of present practitioner or healthcare knowledge and expertise. The next 15-week live/virtual training program begins on May 7th.

For more information, testimonials and registration, visit <http://nickersoninstitute.com/individual-health-coach-training/> or contact Dr. Nickerson at drwendynickerson@gmail.com or call 888-339-8443.