

# POINTERS FOR PARENTS

## Helping Teens With Depression, Loneliness And Anxiety

(NAPSA)—Understanding the symptoms of teen depression may help parents get their children the help they need.

Here's a situation they may be able to relate to: A girl named "Ronnie" was crying herself to sleep every night feeling lonely, unloved and depressed. The anxiety of being teased at school, having no friends, constant fighting with her sister and feeling ignored by her alcoholic parents was just too much. She was withdrawing, her grades were failing and she was looking for any way to make the pain go away. She wondered, should she numb her pain with drinking, huffing or cutting? Should she run away from her pain and take her chances on the streets? Or should she end her suffering once and for all?

"Ronnie's tale is typical of many teens in crisis today. Many of these young people show up at our doors looking for help, feeling they have nowhere else to turn," says Jim White, president of Covenant House International, the largest nonprofit in the U.S. helping homeless youth. Covenant House has 21 crisis centers/shelters annually helping over 65,000 homeless young people who run away from home, are kicked out or age out of the foster care system.

Founded in 1972, Covenant House has reached over 1 million young people via its crisis centers/shelters with immediate assistance (food and shelter) and support to transition from life-on-the-streets to a positive future (counseling, health services, substance abuse intervention, legal services, spiritual guidance, educational and vocational opportunities and life-skills training).



**Teens who suspect they have a problem with depression should talk to someone they trust.**

"If not dealt with, feelings of anxiety, loneliness, grief, anger and poor self-esteem can lead teens to depression, substance abuse, running away and even thoughts of suicide," says White. "These are the kids that call us or show up at one of our facilities thinking 'nobody cares what happens to me.' We show them that there are plenty of people and organizations who care. We show them that lifesaving help can be just a phone call or e-mail away."

Teens can get help from Covenant House's NINELINE (800-999-9999), (TTY: 1-800-999-9915), a free 24/7 hotline, and [www.NINELINE.org](http://www.NINELINE.org), a free 24/7 online community. Both offer immediate assistance with highly trained counselors with access to resources in local communities. In the past 21 years, the hotline has helped over 1.5 million callers with crisis intervention, counseling support and referrals to local shelters/agencies. Set up as a confidential place for young people to get help, it also gives parents and caregivers advice.

Many people suffer from unsettling feelings, even adults. Often these feelings are temporary and will pass, however, it is important to understand these feelings and not let them get worse. Teens who suspect they might have a problem should ask themselves the questions in the quiz that follows. Although the following quiz is not meant to replace a clinical diagnosis by a licensed physician, answering "Yes" to three or more questions might indicate a potential problem with depression.

1. Do you need constant reassurance from friends and family?
2. Are you having difficulty concentrating or making decisions?
3. Are you overly tired, having trouble sleeping?
4. Do you feel stressed beyond your limits?
5. Do you feel a constant worry, tension or apprehensive about things in the future?
6. Have you experienced symptoms of anxiety like a rapid heart beat, uncontrollable sweating, frequent urination, diarrhea, dizziness or fainting?
7. Are you uncommunicative, withdrawn or lonely?
8. Are you obsessed with thoughts of death, dying and suicide?
9. Are you disinterested in things that normally make you happy (school, work, sports, friends, family)?
10. Have you fantasized about or attempted suicide in the past?

"The first step in dealing with your problems is to talk with someone you trust," says White. "You can contact us. We are ready to talk with you any time of day."

More information can be found at [www.covenanthouse.org](http://www.covenanthouse.org).