



*Su apoyo puede ayudar a su joven a volver a la tierra sólida*

DELAWARE'S  
PROJECT  
LIFE  
(LIVING IS FOR EVERYONE)

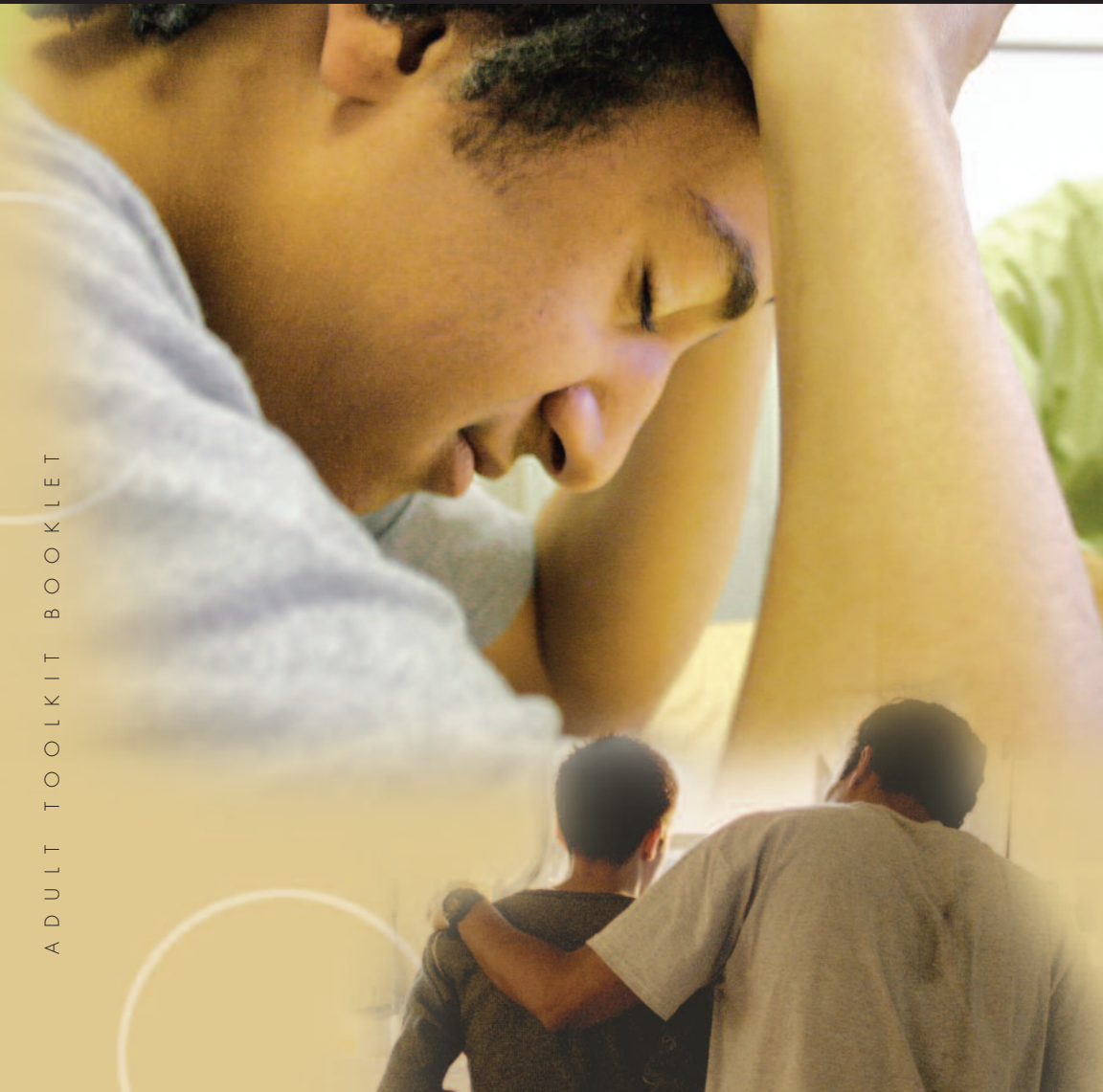
ADULT TOOLKIT BOOKLET



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*Your support can help your teen get back on solid ground*

ADULT TOOLKIT BOOKLET





## DEAR PARENTS AND FAMILIES,

It's not unusual for your teen to feel down or have the blues sometimes. Teen years are full of ups and downs. The demands of teachers, family and friends—and the fear of not meeting them—can create stress and worry. When things go wrong at school or at home, teens may feel unsure of themselves or question how they fit in. On top of that, they face choices about friendships, sex, alcohol and drugs. They may feel they are receiving confusing messages. This brochure gives guidance and tools to better understand depression and suicide. We hope you will use these tools to support your teen who may be in need.

Sincerely,

*Project LIFE of Delaware*

## THERE ARE THREE MAJOR DEPRESSION DISORDERS

Getting properly diagnosed is very important in treating depression. Getting a second opinion is okay, too!

### 1. Signs of major depressive disorder

- Feelings of being worthless and intense feelings of hopelessness
- Getting out of bed may seem impossible
- Eating healthy becomes very difficult to do
- Separating yourself from others

### 2. Signs of bipolar disorder (manic-depressive illness)

- Feeling lots of energy and happiness (mania), followed by depression and sadness

### 3. Signs of dysthymic disorder (less severe than major depression)

- Finding it difficult to accomplish any goals
- Feeling unmotivated for long periods of time



## WARNING SIGNS OF DEPRESSION

Depression can lead to eating disorders, school and social problems, isolation, physical symptoms, and even suicide.

If your teen shows five or more of these signs, he or she may be depressed:

- Sadness, anxiousness, excessive crying
- Noticeable weight gain or loss, or a change in eating habits
- Physical symptoms such as headaches, digestive problems, body pains
- Irritability, moodiness
- Sleeping too much or too little, waking up several times a night
- Unusually low energy
- Comments on feelings of being helpless, hopeless, and worthless
- Loss of interest in activities and hobbies
- Difficulty concentrating on homework and other tasks
- Difficulty in making decisions

## WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE

### *How can I find treatment and who pays for it?*

Most insurance plans cover treatment for depression. Call and ask what type of treatment is covered. If you don't have insurance, call your local or county government office; they may offer treatment at a health center or clinic. The cost of treatment is based on income. Medicaid plans also may pay for depression treatment.

### *Others who can help you:*

- Psychiatrists, psychologists, licensed social workers, licensed mental health counselors
- Peer support groups
- Hospital psychiatry departments
- Mental health programs at universities
- State hospital outpatient clinics
- Employee help programs
- Emergency room doctors

*Check the phonebook under "mental health," "health," or "physicians."*

- Previous suicide attempts
- Any kind of family history of suicide or attempted suicide
- A psychiatric disorder (90 percent of people who complete suicide have a treatable illness, such as depression)
- Statements about feeling helpless, hopeless, or worthless
- Statements about being a "burden" to others, and "you would be better off without me"
- A loss of interest in activities
- Impulsivity
- Behaviors or statements that indicate "goodbyes"
- Talking about death
- Listening to songs about death; creating artwork related to death
- Using alcohol and/or drugs; driving fast
- Exhibiting risky behavior, such as cutting or hurting himself or herself
- Giving away valued possessions

## *If you think your teen may be suicidal, you should:*

- Remain calm
- Tell your loved one that you are worried about him or her
- Take any threat to hurt himself or herself seriously!
- Do not challenge your loved one to “do it” or “go ahead”
- Never say suicide is stupid, or tell them to “snap out of it”
- Show concern and ask caring questions and listen to his or her answers
- Reassure your teen that you know how to get him or her help
- Stay close to your loved one while you contact a trusted health professional
- Remove items that may harm your loved one, such as knives and guns

**If your teen is having suicidal thoughts, encourage him or her to call 1-800-273-TALK (8255). If your loved one is in immediate crisis, call 9-1-1. Do not leave him or her alone.**

**If you have a problem finding a therapist for your child, call 1-800-722-7710.**

## *What to do if your teen attempts suicide*

If your loved one has already attempted suicide, you play an important role in his or her treatment. The hospital will decide if he or she should be released. If you feel that your loved one is still in danger, tell the treatment team dealing with the case. Some teens will try to say anything it takes to get out of treatment, and think they can help themselves on their own. A suicide attempt is very serious and needs to be dealt with professionally. You and your family must encourage ongoing treatment.

## *What to do in the hospital emergency room:*

Ask direct questions to the doctor or therapist such as:

- “How can I help my child?”
- “Do I need to make a follow-up appointment?”
- “What signs can I look for at home?”

Also, be sure to ask your loved one questions such as:

- “Do you feel safe to leave the hospital?”
- “How is your relationship with your doctor?”
- “What else can I do for you?”
- “Will you agree to talk to me/us if you feel suicidal again?”

## *What to do at home:*

Remove guns, sharp objects, and even pain medicines. Overdoses are common, even if it's Tylenol or aspirin. Decrease the amount of alcohol in the house as well. A safety plan can be made with your therapist or doctor. Tell your doctor or therapist your loved one's habits, likes and dislikes, and tell them what is going on in his or her life that may have “triggered” the attempt.

Encourage your loved one to communicate openly. Connections are critical in treatment. It may be necessary to get an additional therapist or doctor involved for treatment to be most effective. Don't forget to listen to your loved one. Understand the “triggers” that may increase stress in your loved one. Common triggers arise from relationship problems, school, change, loss of a loved one, or a traumatic experience.

Finally, if your loved one has alcohol or drug abuse issues, it is important to seek out a substance abuse specialist. It is very common for a depressed teen who also abuses alcohol and drugs to attempt to treat his or her own disorder.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:



[www.mhainde.org](http://www.mhainde.org)

Contact: Victoria Chang, MSW

(302) 654-6833

1-800-287-6423



*The Department of Services for  
Children, Youth and Their Families  
Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services*

<http://kids.delaware.gov/pbhs/pbhs.shtml>

Contact: Marybeth Johns, MSW

(302) 633-2600

1-800-722-7710

[www.getrightsideup.org](http://www.getrightsideup.org)

[www.delteenspace.org](http://www.delteenspace.org)

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