

DEPRESSION & OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Definition

Depression is classified as a mood disorder with cyclical symptoms that can disappear and reappear. These symptoms can interfere with a young person's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, resulting in difficulties with occupational performance and overall well-being.



Occupational Performance:

Children who may experience signs and symptoms of depression may be impacted in the following areas of occupation:

Social Participation:

- Isolation due to a loss of interest, feelings of inadequacy, and low energy
- Family stress and tension can result in social withdrawal



Activities of Daily Living:

- Changes in eating patterns
- Loss of interest in self-care

Education:

- Difficulty concentrating and completing tasks
- May be labeled as "lazy" or disinterested
- May refuse to attend school



Collaboration within the home, school, & community

Home: develop low-stress home routines, provide education to the family on the impact of specific symptoms, focus on children's favorite activities

School: modify assignments and the environment to reduce stress and create positive learning, create an adapted school schedule

Community: offer opportunities for participation in low-stress situations and enjoyable activities that do not challenge their self-worth

*Note:

Symptom presentation varies among children and should be assessed on an individual basis.

REFERENCE

AMERICAN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION. (N.D.). OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY'S ROLE IN MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION, PREVENTION, & INTERVENTION WITH CHILDREN & YOUTH. DEPRESSION. [HTTPS://WWW.AOTA.ORG/-/MEDIA/CORPORATE/FILES/PRACTICE/CHILDREN/SCHOOLMHTOOLKIT/DEPRESSION.PDF](https://www.aota.org/-/media/corporate/files/practice/children/schoolmhtoolkit/depression.pdf)

Adapted by: Sevak Baghramyan, Vanessa Hernandez, Filtria Ignatowski, & Grace Ko, 2021

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION IN CHILDREN

FREQUENTLY CRYING

Hypersensitivity: The child may be overly sensitive to and emotionally triggered by minor things/events that would typically not affect them



ACTING SAD

The child may present with behaviors of isolation, pessimism, crying easily, or hypersensitivity.



CHANGE IN APPETITE

The child may overeat or eat less food than usual.



CHANGE IN SLEEP PATTERN

The child may sleep more or less hours than typical. In the classroom, the changes may be observed as being extremely sleepy or falling asleep in class.



LACK OF ENERGY

The child may avoid activities or report that they are too tired to do anything.



DIMINISHED CONCENTRATION/ATTENTION

The child may uncharacteristically "zone out" or have difficulty staying on task.



LACK OF INTEREST IN HOBBIES

The child may begin to show no interest in typical activities/hobbies that they have enjoyed. Signs may include the child no longer looking happy when engaging in the activities/hobbies.



AGITATION/IRRITABILITY

The child may display angry behaviors that are not typical for them, such as being easily agitated over little things.



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LEVELS OF INTERVENTIONS



TIER 1 Promotion

- Schoolwide efforts to promote healthy lifestyles, self-esteem, acceptance of individual differences, non-tolerance of bullying, etc.
- Educate on the value of enjoyable activities in improving mood
- Encourage children to share feelings and experiences through everyday conversation, social interaction, and creative expression

TIER 2 Prevention

- Small group after-school clubs that promote self-esteem, sensory modulation, and non-threatening socialization and social skill-building

TIER 3 Intensive

- Modified school demands and schedule
- Targeted sensory processing needs
- Family education

American Occupational Therapy Association. (n.d.). *Occupational therapy's role in mental health promotion, prevention, & intervention with children & youth. Depression.* <https://www.ota.org/-/media/Corporate/Files/Practice/Children/SchoolMHToolkit/Depression.pdf>

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