

THE TREVOR
ROMAIN COMPANY

SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:

- What would you risk to save a life?
- Feeling accepted by peers.
- The pressure of success.
- Symptoms of depression.
- Standardized testing.
- Depression intervention.

INSIDE
THIS ISSUE:

- To Save a Life 2
- Fitting In 2
- The Pressure of "Doing..." 2
- How Do I Know? 3
- "The" Test 3
- Intervention 3
- Resources & Information 4

Stress & Depression

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 7

FEBRUARY, 2010

When Stress Leads to Depression

As a former administrator, I often find myself asking principals what challenges students are currently facing. I have been disheartened to discover that stress is impacting our students at even younger ages than before. The statistics are alarming for teenage and adolescent depression. According to recent data, 20% of teens will experience depression before they reach adulthood (Teen Depression, 2010). Depression crosses gender, income level, race, achievement and social backgrounds.

One of the most common questions is why? *Why are kids so stressed out today?* Depression can be triggered by a family move to a new environment when the child must change schools. A pet, friend or family member is seriously ill or dies. The social pressures of making

friends, fitting in, participating in extra-curricular activities, excelling in either academics or sports, and making good grades can often make students feel



Life's circumstances often lead to periods of depression.

unsuccessful which may create stress and/or depression. "As many as 8.3% of teens suffer from depression for at least a year at a time, compared to

about 5.3% of the general population" (Teen Depression, 2010).

The concern for depression is directly linked to the increase in teen suicide. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "suicide is the third leading cause of death for 15 to 24-year olds" with "untreated depression playing a primary role" (Help Guide, 2010). As much as "90% of suicide victims suffer from a mental illness, and suffering from depression can make a teenager as much as 12 times more likely to attempt suicide" (Teen Depression, 2010). Although "less than 33% of teens with depression get help, 80% of teens with depression can be successfully treated if they seek help from a doctor and therapist, and many local health clinics offer free or discounted treatment for teens (Teen Depression, 2010).

Tears Of A Tiger

In *Tears Of A Tiger*, by Sharon Draper, Andy is driving the night his longtime friend is killed. Two other friends are in the car as well but survive. The three survivors of the horrific crash feel helpless and responsible for the death of their friend. While Andy's friends move past their guilt and pain, Andy allows death

to become the focus of his life and is overwhelmed by depression (Sharon Draper, 2010).

In the months following the accident, "the lives of Andy and his friends are traced through a series of letters, articles, homework assignments, and dialogue" (Sharon Draper, 2010).

The book is written in a conversational, appealing and uniquely readable style. This multiple award-winning book reflects on the terrible consequences that can result from a poor decision and offers insight into the effect of depression on individual young adults.

To Save a Life



How far would you go? How much would you risk?

On January 22, 2010, TO SAVE A LIFE will be in theaters nationwide. The film was created by New Song Pictures, Outreach Films and is distributed by Samuel Goldwyn Films.

TO SAVE A LIFE is a movie about the real-life challenges of teens. In the movie, “Jake and Roger grew up as best friends. But in high school, Jake becomes a star athlete who has it all: a college scholar-

ship and the perfect girl, an ideal life that comes at the exclusion of his childhood friend. Meanwhile, Roger no longer fits in anywhere and becomes tired of always being pushed aside. He makes a tragic decision that spins Jake's world out of control” (to Save A Life, 2010). As Jake searches for answers, he begins a journey that will change his life forever as he begins to realize that *some people are just dying to be heard* (To

Save A Life, 2010).

The movie invites teens to think about their answer to teen depression and loneliness: *How far would you go? How much would you risk? How hard would you fight... to save a life?* Many local communities are holding events surrounding this film, asking teens to become involved and aware of those around them. The movie is rated PG-13.

“Friends become more important in middle and highschool, often adding stress to social networking.”

Fitting In

Let’s face it. We all need to feel accepted. For some students, this need is paralleled by fear as students often deal with bullies and cliques.

Bullies: Encourage students to be self-confident. Look others in the eye, stand tall and speak up for others if you see they are mistreated. A bully is look-

ing for a “loner,” or someone who is not likely to have friends or help readily available.

Cliques: It’s better to have one or two loyal friends than several fair-weather friends who tell you who to like and not to like or pressure you into dressing a certain way. Treat others how you wish to be treated

and seek out new friendships. It’s normal to out-grow friends and make new friends along the way. Being popular is most easily accomplished by being yourself.

Friends become more important in middle and high school, often adding stress to social networking.

The Pressure of “Doing Well”

Counselors at the University of Dundee have found the following feelings, thoughts, and beliefs to be associated with perfectionism: fear of failure, fear of making mistakes, fear of disapproval, all-or-none thinking, and commonly the belief that others are easily

successful (Connect with Kids, 2010). Perfectionism ironically robs students of opportunities to learn and grow because they avoid circumstances that present the potential for mistakes.

How can educators help? Discuss realistic and unrealistic goals. Ask students when 90%, 80% or 70% is

acceptable. Help students recognize the value of “the process” of learning as opposed to focusing on the end result. *What power lies in making a mistake? What is the worst thing that can happen if a mistake is made?* Our behaviors and thoughts need to be healthy ones, focusing on realistic goals and challenges.

What power lies in making a mistake?



How Do I Know?



Let's face it, being a teenager is not an easy job. There will be heartbreaks, disappointments and periods in which life seems difficult and complicated. Although many of us are familiar with the symptoms of depression, Help Guide points out that some symptoms are more common in teens than in their

- Depression symptoms often differ from those of adults.**
- **Irritability.** "Irritability, rather than sadness, is often the predominant mood in depressed teens." Teens may be grumpy, hostile, easily frustrated and prone to angry outbursts (Help Guide, 2010).
 - **Aches and Pains.** "Depressed teens frequently complain about physical ailments such as headaches or stomachaches." Unless there's a medical cause, "aches and pains" may indicate depression (Help Guide, 2010).

- **Sensitivity.** "Depressed teens are plagued by feelings of worthlessness, making them extremely vulnerable to criticism, rejection, and failure" (Help Guide, 2010).
- **Withdrawing.** Teens often withdraw from some, but not all people. "While adults tend to isolate themselves when depressed, teenagers usually keep at least some friendships. However, teens with depression socialize less than before, pull away from their parents, or start hanging out with a different crowd" (Help Guide, 2010).

"An overemphasis on 'doing well' often causes students to feel trapped and intimidated."

"The" Test

Let's face it, standardized testing causes stress! The pressure of "passing" has become so highly emphasized that students are often overwhelmed with test anxiety as they seek to earn a "perfect score." What advice can we give to students? **Focus on effort!** Do well because you know the answers, not for fear of not passing. **Stay positive!** Envision reading

the questions and calmly marking the answers. **Exercise!** Practice taking deep breaths, mediating and staying relaxed. **Eat right!** Skipping breakfast is never a good idea, especially on a test day. **Comfort counts!** Wear your favorite jeans or write with your lucky pencil.

Tests simply ask us to demonstrate what we know, what we have learned. An overemphasis on "doing well" often causes students to feel trapped and intimidated. We must acknowledge testing fears; otherwise students feel not only anxious, but embarrassed when their concerns are casually dismissed, "Oh, stop worrying. You'll do fine!"

Intervention

The National Association of School Psychologists recommends keeping the following in mind when attempting to intervene with a student who demonstrates depression:

- 1) Develop a working and collaborative relationship, using positive approaches.
- 2) Remember that depression is not a choice. Provide extra support and avoid punitive approaches. Recognize that the student may be doing the best they can at this time.
- 3) Make adjustments and accommodations (without lowering expectations) in assignments or tasks.
- 4) Provide opportunities for success, believing in the student's competence.
- 5) Seek help from support personnel by asking for suggestions and work together to create an individual student plan.



Depression is not a choice.

**The Trevor
Romain Company**

4412 Spicewood Springs Rd.
Suite 705
Austin, Texas 78759
Phone: 512-480-8818
Fax: 512-480-8815

Daphne Morris, M.Ed., met Trevor Romain in 1992 when he visited a school as a guest speaker. Impressed by Trevor's profound and meaningful impact on students and educators, Daphne joined The Trevor Romain Company in 2006. A former elementary school principal, Daphne holds two Master's degrees in education.

We want to hear from you!

Please tell us how our newsletter is benefiting you.

(502) 477 - 1693

**Promoting social & emotional fitness
for kids.**



Resources:

Connect with Kids. "Academic Pressure." http://www.connectwithkids.com/tipsheet/2008/400_aug27/thisweek/080827_pressure.shtml (accessed January, 2010).

Family Doctor. "Depression in Children and Teens." <http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/children/parents/special/common/641.html> (accessed January, 2010).

Help Guide. "Teen Depression: A Guide for Parents and Teachers." http://www.helpguide.org/mental/depression_teen.htm (accessed January, 2010).

National Association of School Psychologists. "Depression: Helping Students in the Classroom." <http://www.nasponline.org/publications/cq/cq353depression.aspx> (accessed January, 2010)

Sharon Draper. <http://sharondraper.com/bootdetail.asp?id=6> (accessed January, 2010).

Teen Depression. "Teenage Depression Statistics." <http://www.teendepression.org/articles5.html> (accessed January, 2010).

To Save A Life. <http://www.tosavealifemovie.com/latestnews/> (accessed January, 2010).

