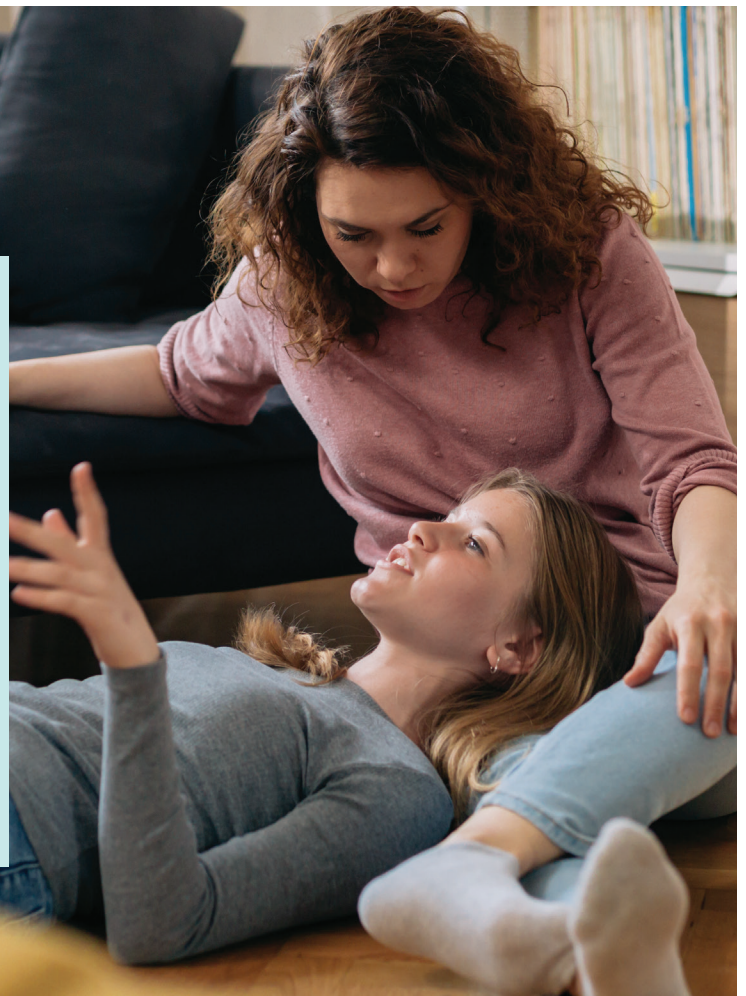


Understanding Depression in Children

Children, like adults, can experience depression. It's more than just feeling sad for a few days—it's a persistent feeling of sadness, hopelessness, or a lack of interest in activities they once enjoyed. Recognizing the signs and knowing how to support your child can make a significant difference in their well-being.



Physical Symptoms

- ✓ Changes in appetite, leading to weight loss or gain
- ✓ Headaches, stomachaches, or other unexplained pains
- ✓ Fatigue or unusual lethargy
- ✓ Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much



Emotional Symptoms

- ✓ Persistent sadness, hopelessness, or emptiness
- ✓ Irritability or frequent mood swings
- ✓ Low self-confidence
- ✓ Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- ✓ Self-critical thoughts
- ✓ Crying more easily than usual
- ✓ Increased frustration or tantrums



Behavioral Symptoms

- ✓ Withdrawing from friends and family
- ✓ Decline in academic performance
- ✓ Decreased motivation to participate in activities
- ✓ Increased arguments or defiance
- ✓ Giving up easily and not trying



Other Signs

- ✓ Trouble concentrating or making decisions
- ✓ Complaints of persistent aches and pains
- ✓ Refusing to go to school or engage in normal activities
- ✓ Expressing thoughts of self-harm or suicide (seek immediate help if this occurs)

How Depression Differs by Age

Depression doesn't look the same for everyone, but for children, teens, and young adults, it can affect how they feel, think, and act. It can interfere with their ability to enjoy life, make friends, and do well in school or work. No matter the age, depression is a serious issue that needs attention and care. With the right help, people of all ages can learn to manage their depression and lead happier, healthier lives.

For Young Children

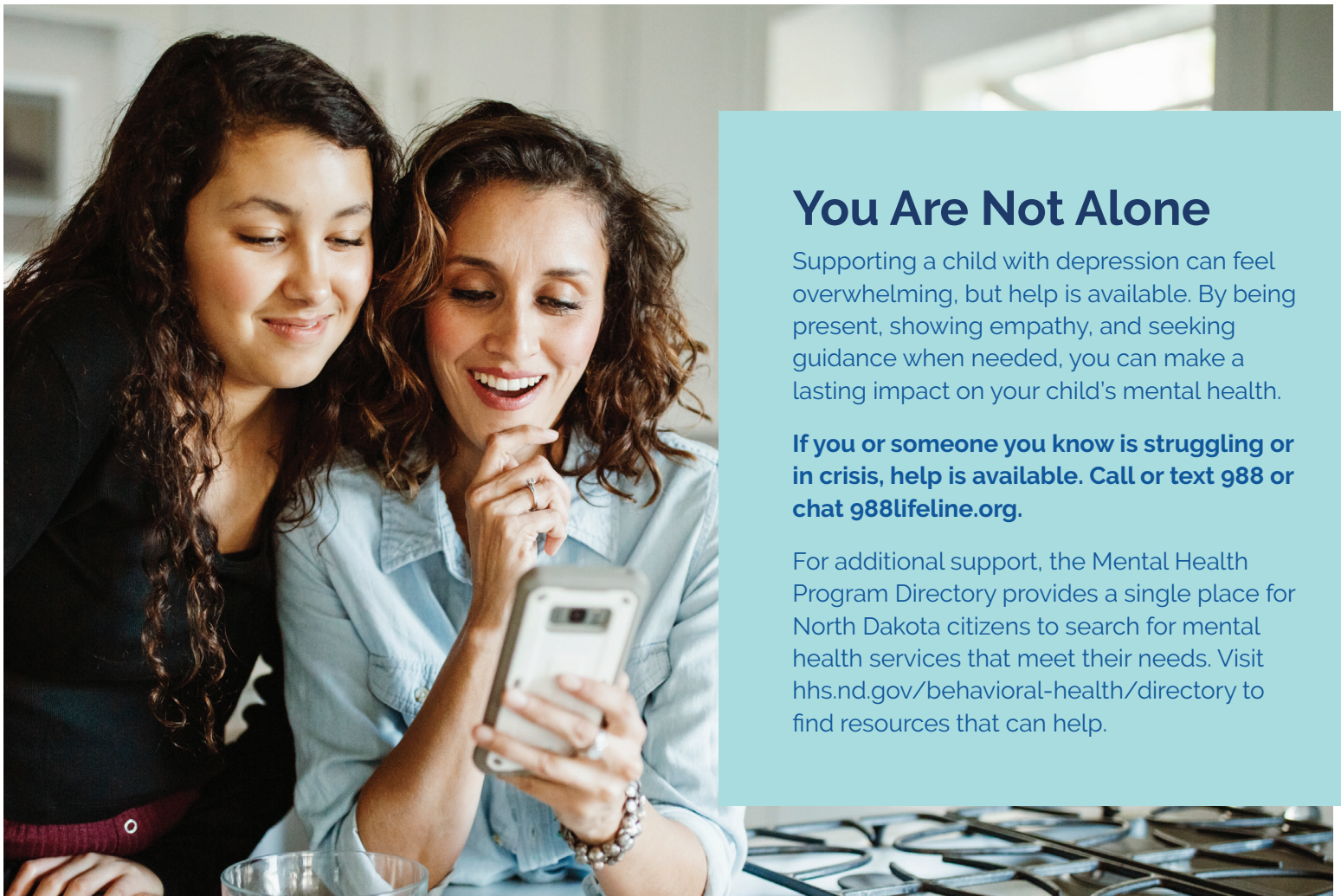
In younger kids, depression might look like constant sadness, but it can also show up as irritability or anger. They might not have the words to express how they feel, so they may act out more, have trouble concentrating, or withdraw from friends and family. They might also experience physical symptoms like stomachaches or headaches without a clear cause. Young children may stop enjoying things they once liked, such as playing with friends or going to school, and may have trouble sleeping or eating.

For Teens

In teenagers, depression can manifest as deep sadness, feelings of worthlessness, or guilt. Adolescents face pressures from school, friendships, and growing independence, which can worsen these feelings. They may withdraw from family or activities they used to enjoy, engage in risky behaviors like substance use, struggle with low energy, or have trouble concentrating. Because adolescence is a time of change, it can be hard to distinguish between normal mood swings and serious depression.

For Young Adults

Young adults face challenges like moving away from home, career decisions, and relationship pressures, which can intensify feelings of depression. They may struggle with maintaining motivation, keeping up with responsibilities, and making decisions about their future. Feelings of loneliness, uncertainty, and isolation can be common. Depression can affect their social, academic, or work life, making daily tasks and relationships difficult to manage.



You Are Not Alone

Supporting a child with depression can feel overwhelming, but help is available. By being present, showing empathy, and seeking guidance when needed, you can make a lasting impact on your child's mental health.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org.

For additional support, the Mental Health Program Directory provides a single place for North Dakota citizens to search for mental health services that meet their needs. Visit hhs.nd.gov/behavioral-health/directory to find resources that can help.