



# BSA SAFETY MOMENT

## DEPRESSION

### SUMMARY

Acute depression is often short-term, but it can be very severe and significantly interfere with an individual's sleep, eating, activity level, and ability to engage effectively in school or work. Chronic depression may occur for at least two years and affect those same areas. The severity may not be to the degree that the person cannot go about their daily routine; they may simply not be as productive as they could be.

### Symptoms of Depression

- Depressed or irritable mood
- Declining or lack of interest in things that usually provide pleasure
- Significant but unintended weight loss or gain
- Deficient or excessive sleeping
- Much increased or decreased activity level than usual
- Fatigue
- Feelings of inferiority or worthlessness
- Excessive or inappropriate guilt
- Difficulty in concentrating or indecisiveness
- Constantly thinking about death
- Attempted suicide or a specific plan for doing so

### How You Can Help

Helping someone cope with depression involves listening in a caring way that shows that you are empathic and understanding. Performing small acts of kindness may include running errands for them, transporting them to different appointments, etc.

### When Professional Help Is Needed

When severe depression is present, the importance of obtaining quality professional health care cannot be overemphasized. It is important to encourage individuals with severe depression, whether acute or chronic forms, to seek appropriate professional help. Health-care professionals will determine if medication may be helpful in reducing the symptoms of depression. Regardless, the support of family, friends, and caring adults provides a crucial role in helping someone who is depressed. A support system can help encourage a depressed individual to stick with treatment, to practice the coping techniques that are learned through therapy, and establish a mutually understood protocol of how to proceed should the condition deteriorate toward suicide.

Individuals needing professional help can contact their personal physician, guidance counselor, local National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) chapter, etc. Scouts who are on medication as part of their therapy generally should continue to take this during outings such as campouts in accordance with their prescribing physician and Scouting guidelines.

### RESOURCES

- American Psychiatric Association—What is Depression?  
[www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/depression/what-is-depression](http://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/depression/what-is-depression)
- Mayo Clinic—Teen depression:  
[www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/teen-depression/symptoms-causes/syc-20350985](http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/teen-depression/symptoms-causes/syc-20350985)
- Mayo Clinic—Major depressive disorder:  
[www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/symptoms-causes/syc-20356007](http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/symptoms-causes/syc-20356007)