



Angwin Community Teen Center

A Part of a Community Teen Alliance

A Place Where All Teens Are Embraced By Their Community

**No Research Needed - You Know Experientially
by Tom Amato**

As I was recently reading through youth statistics pertaining to depression my heart dropped:

- **Pre-schoolers are the fastest-growing market for antidepressants. At least four percent of preschoolers -- over a million -- are clinically depressed.**
Psychiatric Services, April 2004. Pill-Popping Pre-Schoolers, Even Toddlers Get the Blues
- **The rate of increase of depression among children is an astounding 23%.**
Harvard Mental Health Newsletter, February 2002.
- **Depression will be the second largest killer after heart disease by 2020.**
World Health Organization report on mental illness released, October 4, 2001.
- **Untreated depression is the number one cause of suicide, the third leading cause of death among teenagers. . .suffering from depression can make a teenager as much as 12 times more likely to attempt suicide.** Teen Depression - Help For Troubled Kids, 2005
- **About 20 percent of teens will experience teen depression before they reach adulthood.**
Teen Depression - Help For Troubled Kids, 2005.

Look around you. Read any newspaper. Watch TV. What are we constantly hearing and seeing? Read about school bullying and violence, drugs and alcohol. **"One in five will experience teen depression before they reach adulthood."** If we played "dot to dot," what do you think we would see if we went in search of the root causes of teen behavior?

How are we addressing the "acting out" within these staggering statistics? Bullying with aggression? Violence with force? Substance Abuse with greater penalties? Anger with greater outrage? It is most interesting that in the teen world . . .Force begets force. Aggression begets more intense aggression. Higher levels of pain begets higher levels of retaliation. . . And . . .Listening begets understanding. Empathy begets a level of calmness. Unconditional love begets trust. "Believing in spite of" begets an experiential understanding of "Grace," and a willingness to extend it.

Please look into your own personal experience. What caused you joy? What caused you pain? **What did you need in those times of distress?** What happened when you didn't get nurture and care? What happened when you cried out and no one listened? What emotions did you experience? How did **you** act out or cope? Did you "buck up" or use some of the very same methods kids are using today?

Some say, I never experienced that. Imagine what you might have done if you felt no one cared? What would you have done if you felt totally inadequate and "disposable?" How would you have coped? What would you have done to experience a sense of peace? Where would you go? Who would you hang out with? How long could you take it?

Think about it . . .and then find a child who is crying out, enter his or her world, be the missing piece, and make the difference.

They need YOU.

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