



Level II: Depression Awareness

A One-Day Program Designed for Grades 5-9

Erika's Lighthouse is a not-for-profit depression and mental health education organization that educates upper elementary, middle school and high school communities about teen depression, eliminates the stigma associated with mental health issues and empowers teens to take charge of their mental health. For more information and other programs and resources, go to www.erikaslighthouse.org.

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This program was written for educators, professionals and other adults working with adolescents to educate them regarding the issues surrounding depression. While Erika's Lighthouse consults with clinical, therapeutic, legal, and child development experts, nothing in this program should be construed as specific or general medical or psychological advice. Erika's Lighthouse assumes no responsibility for any actions taken as a result of the material or information contained in the program. Every child's and family's situation is unique, and Erika's Lighthouse urges children, adolescents, parents, and educators to seek and find competent professional advice appropriate for specific individuals and actions.

Welcome to Level II: Depression Awareness A One-Day Lesson Plan for Grades 5-9

Maintaining good mental health is among the most challenging issues affecting today's youth, and the stressors young people face can be intense. Depression is an important—and often a required—topic for schools to address with their students. At Erika's Lighthouse, we have a strong track record of creating mental health and depression education classroom programs that are teen-centered, effective, impactful and hopeful.

This program was inspired by a young person named Erika.

Erika was a bright light who, sadly, lost her battle with depression in 2004 at age 14. Erika's Lighthouse was founded in her honor and is dedicated to helping other young people learn about depression and overcome the stigma surrounding mental health disorders. Level II: Depression Awareness was designed to be taught in classrooms for grades 5-9, led either by a teacher and/or a school mental health professional. The lessons provide opportunities for students and staff to engage in open and safe conversations about depression and good mental health.

This one-day version of the program consists of an engaging and interactive lesson designed to be taught to provide students with increased:

- knowledge of key concepts related to identifying depression
 - self-advocacy and peer-to-peer intervention to promote help-seeking
 - awareness of how they can support their own mental health and well-being
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CLASS NORMS/GROUP AGREEMENTS

If this program is being offered as part of an existing health education program, you will probably already have established norms or group agreements. If this is the case, this is a good time to review existing group norms with your students and refine them in preparation for this curriculum.

This curriculum addresses sensitive topics. In order for students to feel safe and be fully engaged in the lessons, it is important to establish group norms and/or agreements. Group norms are ways that groups of people can work together in a

thoughtful, respectful, safe and productive way. If you have already established group norms, be sure that each of the following guidelines have been addressed.

If you have not developed group norms, here are some guidelines you may find useful in helping students come up with them:

- Everyone should be involved in creating the group norms.
- Use guiding questions to help students identify the norms that will achieve a safe and caring classroom:
 - How can we be sure that people will be able to safely share private information and feelings?
 - How can we be sure that everyone has a chance to freely share and that they are heard?
 - How can we be sure that people are not forced to say or do something that makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe?

Some examples of group norms that are brainstormed may include:

- Listen to others' perspectives
- Maintain confidentiality
- Participate
- Right to pass
- Respect differences

HOW TO ANSWER DIFFICULT QUESTIONS PROTOCOL

Sometimes when covering sensitive content such as emotions, social influences, and personal topics, questions may arise that are difficult to answer. Sometimes, the question may relate to personal values that are not universally shared. Or the question might have more than one answer depending on a person's values, beliefs, and personal history.

It may be helpful to follow this protocol when responding to difficult questions:

1. ***Affirm that the student's question is legitimate.*** Restate it for clarification and acknowledge that others might also wonder about this. "Thanks for asking that. I am sure other people would like to know about..."
2. ***Identify if there is a belief/value that is inherent in the question.*** Point out anything about the question that might be opinion-related. It is important to express the range of opinions without identifying that any single opinion is the right one. "Some people might believe...while others believe..."
3. ***Answer the factual part of the question.*** "Here is what is known to be true..."
4. ***Refer to a trusted adult.*** "This would be a great question to ask your (aunt, dad, caregiver, etc.)"
5. ***Check back.*** "Did I answer your question?"
6. ***Leave the door open.*** "If you have any other related questions, I hope you will feel free to ask."

SENSITIVE & PERSONAL ISSUES

Any time a sensitive topic is addressed in the classroom, it is important to ensure that all students are protected from potential trauma, particularly those who may have had adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Social, emotional and mental health education may deal with issues of interpersonal relationships, suicide and substance use.

The teacher's capacity to listen non-judgmentally, with empathy, and to demonstrate a comfortable attitude in dealing with students' beliefs and feelings associated with mental health and emotions is crucial to the curriculum's successful implementation. Students come to the classroom with many different values, cultural and religious beliefs, and ideas about these topics. Teachers should keep in mind that because their students come from many backgrounds and traditions, some may have difficulty sharing ideas and discussing these issues with their peers.

When a student has experienced trauma of some sort in their life, it may have an impact on their ability to thrive and be healthy. These resources will provide guidelines and suggestions for helping to avoid further trauma to students affected by ACEs.

<https://www.weareteachers.com/10-things-about-childhood-trauma-every-teacher-needs-to-know/>
<https://www.weareteachers.com/video-every-teacher-needs-know-childhood-trauma/>

Teachers can go a long way towards helping a child who has depression by noting what they see, consulting with the school's health staff, and treating the child with respect and sensitivity.

But it is important to note that teachers are not responsible for either diagnosing or treating a child who has depression. Only a trained mental health professional can do that.

TEACHING THIS PROGRAM

Erika's Lighthouse wants educators to be successful when teaching this program. Here are a few suggestions to ensure that.

1. Review all of the materials before teaching: it is suggested that each teacher reviews all parts and the accompanying materials before teaching.
 2. While teaching the program, take notes on how the lesson went in different classes. Take notes on how you might adapt the lesson in the future. If you have a suggestion for an edit or adaptation, feel free to share with Erika's Lighthouse staff.
 3. If you have student work samples that stand out from any worksheets, please share with Erika's Lighthouse!
 4. If any of the content leads to a high level of distress or emotional discomfort for you or students, please reach out to a mental health clinician.
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988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
(Text or Call 988 or Chat 988lifeline.org)

PLEASE CONTACT US AT ANY TIME AT
info@erikaslighthouse.org

Level II: Depression Awareness

A One-Day Program for Grades 5-9

OBJECTIVE

To educate youth on the signs and symptoms of depression, help-seeking and good mental health behaviors.

Students will increase:

- knowledge of key concepts related to identifying depression
- self-advocacy and peer-to-peer intervention to promote help-seeking
- awareness of how they can support their own mental health and well-being

OVERVIEW

In this one-day program, students will learn that depression is a common and serious mood disorder and how to recognize the warning signs. They will learn what a trusted adult is and how to access one, if in need.

The lesson concludes with a bookmark handout for each student summarizing the lesson and where to find help. Finally, each student should receive a self-referral card, providing an opportunity for students to reach out for help confidentially.

TEACHER PREPARATION

Review all of the Level II: One-Day Lesson program materials.

- Read the facilitator guide script
- Review the slide deck
- Watch the [full Level II video](#)
- Look through student vignettes
 - Determine if your students will select a student vignette ([YouTube](#) or [Vimeo](#)) to watch or if you will select one for the class
 - Consideration: If the Level II: Depression Awareness One-Day program is being taught to more than one grade at a school, you might want to consider selecting the Student Story for your students to watch. This way they can watch a different story next year.
- Determine how to share the pre & post test links with students (QR Code or Hyperlink)
 - Pre-test: <http://www.elhms.info>
 - Post-test: <http://www.elhmstest.info>

Make copies of the Student Workbook, [Student Bookmark](#) and [Self-Referral Card](#) for each student. These resources are also available in Spanish on the Resource Portal.

- There are two options for the student bookmarks:
 - Ahead of time, fill out the contact information for the school mental health professional (i.e School Counselor or School Social Worker) on the bookmark template (available through Canva on the Resource Portal)
 - Have students fill out their own bookmarks.

- Coordinate a process for collecting Self-Referral Cards and student referrals with the school mental health staff.
- Have students fill out their own bookmarks.

SCRIPT

Slides 1: Title Slide

"Today we are going to watch a video and talk about depression and mental health. Before we begin the lesson, each of you will take a quick pre-test to determine what you already know. Use the QR code or link on the slide to start your pre-test."

Slides 2: Overview of Erika's Lighthouse

"This program was inspired by a young person named Erika. Erika was a bright light who sadly lost her battle with depression in 2004, at age 14. Erika's Lighthouse was founded in her honor and is dedicated to helping other young people learn about depression and overcome the stigma surrounding mental health disorders.

If anything shared today prompts a feeling that you need to talk to someone, make sure to go to a trusted adult or visit the mental health worker's office here at school which is located _____. Please feel free to ask questions at any time."

Slides 3: Objectives of Lesson

"Today you're going to learn that depression is a mood disorder. You'll learn the signs and symptoms of depression. You'll be able to identify a reliable trusted adult and we'll discuss how to maintain good mental health."

Slide 4: The Video

"Now we will watch a 10-minute video. As you watch the video and read the important information in bold, answer the questions in your Student Workbook. Be prepared to participate by sharing what you have learned."

Slide 5: Discussion Questions

As a whole group, ask and discuss the following questions & have students answer in their Student Workbook:

1. Depression is a common and serious mood disorder that can happen to anyone. It is not your fault if you have it and you are not alone. How common is depression in teens?
Answer: 15-20% of young people will experience depression before they reach adulthood. This is about 5 students in a class of 25
2. Depression is not like a rash on your skin. Can you tell by someone's appearance that they have depression?
Answer: No, You can not tell by someone's appearance if they are depressed because depression occurs on the inside and among all ages, genders, races and cultures.

3. Depression is marked by a chemical imbalance in the brain that impacts mood, thoughts, and behaviors. Sometimes genetics can play a role in whether or not someone gets depression. If there is a history of depression in your family, does it mean you will develop it?
 Answer: No. If there is a family predisposition for depression it means that you are at higher risk but it does not mean that you will definitely inherit depression. It is always smart to know your family's mental health history. Don't be afraid to ask.
4. Sometimes stress in the environment can trigger depression. Does this mean anyone who experiences stress will be diagnosed with depression?
 Answer: No, not everyone who experiences stress will get depression. Everyone experiences stress differently. Some people can tolerate stress well and others are more sensitive to stressful events. However, continual stress is not good for anyone's mental health. If you are experiencing intense or continual stress, try to do things that usually help you feel better. If that does not work, tell a trusted adult.
5. Depression is serious. Is depression a risk factor for suicide?
 Answer: Yes, depression is the number one risk factor to suicide. While depression is common, suicide is rare. Suicide can happen if someone's depression is intense, not identified or they are not receiving the proper support.
6. Depression is more than a feeling of sadness. In order to have a diagnosis of depression you need at least five symptoms present most every day for at least two weeks. However, it is possible to have moments of enjoyment with depression. What are the signs and symptoms of depression?
 Answer: Yes, depression is the number one risk factor to suicide. While depression is common, suicide is rare. Suicide can happen if someone's depression is intense, not identified or they are not receiving the proper support.

Slide 6: Student Stories - Signs & Symptoms

(Optional: You can also do this as a large group or students can do individually)

"We're going to break up into small groups and watch a short video on signs and symptoms. Each group will get to choose which student story they want to watch. In your Student Workbook, there are descriptions and QR codes for each of the student stories. Select which story you'd like to watch and while you watch, write down in your workbook the signs and symptoms that the student experienced."

Lindsey is a first-generation student from Illinois whose depression started at six years old. She says her depression felt like "little tornadoes in my head". Lindsey loves to read, is a dedicated student and is very involved in clubs at school.	Henry is from Knoxville, Tennessee. He loves to write, play sports and hang out with his friends. Henry describes feeling anxious, worried often and "never really feeling happy".
Jasmine is an African American student who moved from a small town to a big city. Her move and experiencing community violence contributed to her depression. She is passionate about church and her family.	Catharine is from Ohio and is a sports enthusiast; she loves ice skating and tennis. Catharine felt that she needed to be "perfect" at everything: sports, school, friends. She was first diagnosed with anxiety, but then her symptoms of depression began.

Alan loves his band and his girlfriend. His depression began during his parents' divorce. He describes his depression as a "big, sinking feeling" in his chest.	Mason is an Asian-American student who experienced anxiety and perfectionism. He loves his family, friends and sports. His dad also experienced depression and is very supportive of Mason.
Edgar recently moved from Mexico City to the United States. He left behind his friends and many of his family members. Edgar loves soccer and music.	Callie is from Chicago. She loves to run track and hang out with her friends. Struggles with her peers impacted her experience with depression and she felt very isolated during this time.

Slide 7: Discussion

Ask students to share what they learned about the student story they watched.
What are some of the signs and symptoms of the student you watched?

Slide 8: Symptoms Review

"As we just discussed, there are various signs and symptoms of depression. Some of the students in the videos described feeling sad or irritable, a change in their sleep pattern, their appetite and general hygiene. As you see on the slide, these are symptoms of depression. Only a doctor or mental health professional can provide a diagnosis of depression, and in order to do so, a person has to have at least 5 symptoms present for most of the time for at least 2 weeks."

Slide 9: Trusted Adult

"It's important for you to know that if you aren't feeling well or if you're concerned about yourself or a friend, you should tell someone.

When I say the words "trusted adult", what characteristics or traits come to mind?"

(You might need to share the idea of a trusted adult by defining the term - an adult who is reliable, dependable, and trustworthy and who can help you - and engage students in identifying potential titles of trusted adults at home, school, and in the community. Remind students to refer to the Important Terms in their Student Workbook.)

When a person or source is **valid**, it means it offers correct information and can be trusted. When a person or source is **reliable**, it means it can be accessed easily and consistently.

Slide 10: Catharine's Help Seeking video

"Let's hear from Catharine and listen to who her trusted adults are. Answer the questions in your Student Workbook."

Slide 11: Catharine's Help Seeking video - Discussion Questions

"Who are Catharine's trusted adults? How did they help her?"

Slide 12: Asking for Help

“So, we have been talking about the importance of telling someone if you think you have depression. But, how do you do that? Asking for help can be challenging. You might feel nervous because you're unsure of how to start the conversation or because you're afraid of what the other person will think of you.

However, asking for help for something like depression is the first step to getting better and, believe it or not, many of us have already had success with similar conversations in the past. Think about a time when you have been sick with the flu and had to ask for help. Usually, it involves talking to a parent about your symptoms, stating what you have already tried to do to feel better, how long the symptoms have been going on and asking for medicine or to see a doctor. Asking for help for depression is really no different. Using these same ideas, we can be effective in getting others to understand what we need in order to move on to a healthy, happy and productive life - something we all deserve.

If you are worried about yourself, first explain to a trusted adult the changes you feel, what you have already tried and what they can do to help you find a mental health professional.”

Slides 13: Let's Role Play (Parent and Teen)

“We are going to role play a conversation between a teen and their parent that will give you a better idea of what it might sound like to ask for help for yourself. (Teacher reads the role of “parent” and a student can read the role of the teen.)

“When asking for help from an adult, some may not understand depression or know what to do. The good news is that there are many other helpful adults out there. It may just take talking to a few to find the right one.”

Slide 14: Role Play Parent and Teen

Teen	Hey, can we talk?
Parent	Sure. What's going on?
Teen	Lately, I haven't been feeling like myself. I feel sad and angry all the time. I'm constantly tired and I can't focus in school.
Parent	I've gone through periods like this when I was your age. Hang in there and I'm sure things will get better with time.
Teen	Well, usually when I'm down I feel better when I go for a run or talk to someone. This time I can't seem to shake it. It's been like this for weeks now. I even took a depression test online and it reported that I should see a doctor to get checked out.
Parent	Really?
Teen	Yeah, I think I need to talk to someone. Can you help me set up an appointment with a doctor?
Parent	Sure, I think that's a great idea.

"When asking for help from an adult, some may not understand depression or know what to do. The good news is that there are many other helpful adults out there. It may just take talking to a few to find the right one."

Slides 15: Let's Role Play between a Teen and a Friend

"But, what if it's a friend you are concerned about? Friends often see changes in friends before parents and other adults do, so it is important to know how to handle a situation with a friend who may be experiencing depression.

The best approach is to communicate to your friend the changes you have noticed, that you care for them and ask how you can help them take action towards talking to a trusted adult.

Let's do a role play of this exchange between two friends to better understand what this kind of conversation may sound like." (Teacher can read the part of Sam and have a student read the friend role, or two students can volunteer to read each role).

Slides 16: Let's Role Play between a Teen and a Friend

Sam	Hey, can we talk? Over the past few weeks, I've noticed that you've been hanging back a lot - not calling or texting me much anymore and skipping out on me and our friends. Recently, you've even missed quite a few play practices. In general, you seem down. This isn't like you. What's going on?
Friend	I'm sorry. I've been feeling weird lately.
Sam	I can tell something's different. I'm worried and care about you.
Friend	You don't have to worry. I'm sure I'll snap out of it eventually.
Sam	You deserve to feel better now and who knows, it could be something as serious as depression. Have you told an adult yet?
Friend	No.
Sam	An adult should know so they can help you find a professional to check it out. Who do you feel comfortable talking to?
Friend	I guess, Mr. Clark.
Sam	I think he's a great choice. Would you like me to come with you? It might make you feel more comfortable.
Friend	Uh sure. Yeah, I'd like that.

Slide 17: When to Notify an Adult

"Keep in mind that each situation with a friend is different and may require a slightly different approach and different action steps. You'll see in your Student Workbook some important points to remember.

If a friend tells you that they are thinking of suicide or hurting themselves, an adult must be notified immediately. A friend may ask you to keep this information a secret, but when it comes to matters of safety, keeping a secret can cost a life."

Slide 18: Student Bookmark

I'm going to hand out some bookmarks for you. On one side you'll see the signs and symptoms of depression and on the other side, you will find tips for taking care of your mental health. I want to ensure you know who you can talk to at school. Write down where in school you can go should you have concerns about yourself or a friend (teacher, counselor's office, school social worker's office, etc.) and answer the two questions in your Student Workbook."

Slide 19: Good Mental Health & Coping Strategies

"Thinking back to the video, we are to discuss strategies for maintaining good mental health. They might include developing good sleep habits, practicing self-care, good eating habits/nutrition, and getting exercise. Some good coping strategies include mindfulness, practicing breathing techniques, or journaling. Take a look at your Student Workbook again and answer the following questions. Be prepared to participate by sharing what you have learned.

1. "What are four ways to practice good mental health?"

Answer: Nutrition, sleep, exercise, coping strategies

2. "How do you take care of your mental health?"

Answer: Nutrition, sleep, exercise and practicing healthy coping skills.

3. "Stress is normal, but too much stress increases the risk for health issues, like depression. What is stress? What are some things that can cause stress?"

Answer: Stress is the body's natural reaction to a situation that is worrisome or threatening, and results in a feeling of being hypervigilant or on-edge. The body releases a chemical called cortisol to activate the "fight, flight or freeze response" needed in a threatening or high pressure situation. Stress can be helpful in motivating us to work effectively to solve a problem. However, too much stress can have a negative impact on our mind and body and even trigger depressive symptoms. What is considered too much will look different from person to person. Many things can cause stress and those things differ from person to person. For some people it could be the pressure of school, trying to fit in or the break-up of a relationship. For others, it may include being bullied, having family trouble or experiencing a serious trauma. Stress is a certainty for all of us from time to time. Therefore, we all need to practice daily mental health habits to manage it.

4. "How do you know you are stressed-how do you experience it in your body? Why is it important to be aware of your own personal stress indicators?"

Answer: Accelerated heart rate, shortness of breath, excessive sweating, headaches, chest pain, dry mouth, sleep problems, change in eating, lack of concentration, irritability, tension or jitters. The sooner you realize you are under stress-the sooner you can make changes and find coping strategies to make you feel better.

(Optional extension: Share the Teen Toolbox on erikaslighthouse.org to have students look through the information or hand out the [Managing Your Depression](#) worksheet for students to refer to.)

Slide 20: 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

"Remember, if anything shared today prompted a feeling that you need to talk to someone, make sure to go to a trusted adult, talk to your counselor, or visit the social worker's office here at school, which is located _____. You can also call or text 988 to speak or text with someone at the suicide and crisis lifeline if you are ever concerned about yourself or a friend."

Slide 21: Self-Referral Cards

"Today we learned about depression and talked about how important it is to talk to a Trusted Adult if you are worried about yourself or a friend. And practicing good mental health includes knowing what kind of strategies work best for you.

I am now going to hand out the self-referral cards. On the card it gives you three options. 1. to talk to a mental health professional here at school in the next 24 hours 2. Talk to a mental health professional here at school within a week 3. That you do not need to talk to a mental health professional. Each of you should select one of these options, fold it in half and hand it back to me.

Slide 22: Post-Test QR Code/Link

"Since we are at the end of the program, each of you will now take a quick post-test. Use the QR code or link on the slide to start your post-test."

<http://www.elhmstpost.info>

For additional resources and support materials, check out the Optional Program Additions and School Policy & Staff Development sections of our Resource Portal.