



Children and Depression

Children can experience depression just like adult people do, and studies show that the number of children with depression is increasing.

Having occasional sadness is normal for children as they are growing up. This is considered to be part of a child's normal developmental growth. However, if the sadness is prolonged and experienced daily, it can be a sign of childhood depression and parents need to consider seeking the advice of their child's pediatrician or medical team.

Common signs and symptoms of depression in children are:

- Feeling depressed, sad, tearful, irritable.
- Not enjoying things as usual.
- Avoiding to go to school or spend time with friends.
- Changes in appetite.
- Tending to sleep less or more than usual.
- Having less energy.
- Feeling that they are not good at anything due to some physical and movement restrictions.
- Expressing an interest in wanting to die.
- Complaining of headache pain or stomach pain.



How to identify depression in children?

There are many ways to identify depression in children, but the easiest way is by asking a child directly about their feelings. Parents who have open communication with their children may find this easier to do. Being an active part of your children's lives can also help a parent identify a change in a child's emotional state.

Children will express depression differently. Some children may say that they are unhappy. Others may say that they feel sad, lonely or even frustrated. When a child begins to share their feeling about hopelessness, no longer having a desire to live, or wanting to harm themselves or others, these are words that parents should not ignore. Consulting with a medical professional can provide parents with guidance on how to best help a child in need of emotional support.

Mental health screenings can be conducted by a pediatrician, school counselor, or mental health professional or they can refer your child for further assessment and treatment.

Types of therapy for children's depression

- Talk Therapy
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Interpersonal Psychotherapy
- Antidepressant medications

Antidepressant medications and children

Antidepressant medications can be effective in relieving the symptoms of depression for some children. Every child is different and consultation with a medical professional is required before considering medication options.

- Fluoxetine or Prozac has been approved by the FDA for treating depression in children 8 years of age and older but requires careful consideration with



your child's scleroderma medical team to check for any possible side effects with other medications your child is currently taking.

How long should a child continue taking antidepressant medication?

Every case is different and you should work with a medical team to determine the best course of treatment for your child before starting or stopping any antidepressant medications for your child.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health illnesses, children should continue taking their medications at least 6-9 months even if they have minimal depressive symptoms to prevent relapse.

Some young people may need treatment for longer than 6-9 months. Children who have a family history of mood disorders, severe and complex episodes of depression, a slow and difficult response to treatment, a history of chronic depression, and/or multiple depressive episodes may benefit from continuing the treatment for 1-2 years or more. Working with a professional team that can manage your child's medication is always advisable.

Can a child's depression pass without treatment?

When depression is untreated, it can lead to serious complications, and it increases the risk for substance abuse, eating disorders, adolescent pregnancy, and suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Untreated depression can lead to a lot of academic and social problems in children, and it can cause more complex and chronic depression.

To learn more about children psychology and mental issues, visit AACAP website

<http://www.aacap.org/galleries/PracticeParameters/Vol%2046%20Nov%202007.pdf>

When taking antidepressant should be stopped?

Before stopping any antidepressant medications for your child you must consult the medical team that prescribed the medication. Work with your child's doctor or mental health professional to determine the right time to stop or replace medications.



What can be done if the child does not improve with medication?

When the given antidepressant is not showing good results, your child's doctor may decide to change the medication or to add psychotherapy. For some children, the best treatment will be a combination of individual psychotherapy and medication.

How to advocate effectively for a child who has depression?

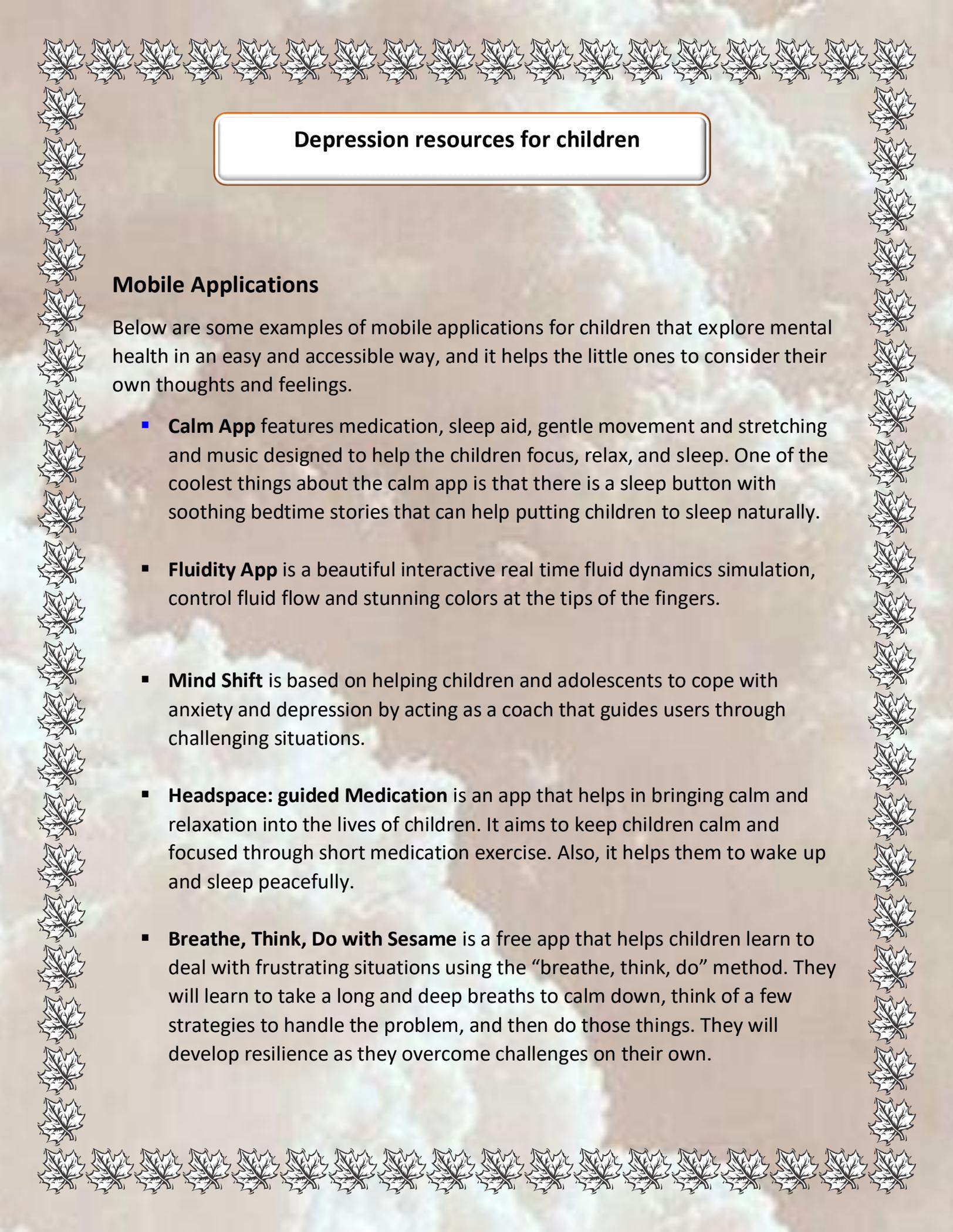
As a parent, you have the right to all information available about the nature of your child's illness, the treatment options, and the risks and benefits of treatment.

Request that your child receives a comprehensive evaluation. Seek answers for all your questions about the diagnosis and any proposed course of treatment. If you are not satisfied with the answers or the information you receive, it is acceptable to seek a second opinion.

Help your child learn about their depression, in an age-appropriate way, so he or she can be an active partner in treatment. It is important to discuss and develop a personalized treatment approach with your health care provider and to weigh and balance the various risks and benefits of treating your child for depression.

How to help a scleroderma's child with depression?

It is important to work with your child's scleroderma medical team of health professionals. Together, they can help you make the right plan for your child to assure an active social, emotional, and physical life can be experienced. make him/her active as much as possible academically, socially, and physically.



Depression resources for children

Mobile Applications

Below are some examples of mobile applications for children that explore mental health in an easy and accessible way, and it helps the little ones to consider their own thoughts and feelings.

- **Calm App** features medication, sleep aid, gentle movement and stretching and music designed to help the children focus, relax, and sleep. One of the coolest things about the calm app is that there is a sleep button with soothing bedtime stories that can help putting children to sleep naturally.
- **Fluidity App** is a beautiful interactive real time fluid dynamics simulation, control fluid flow and stunning colors at the tips of the fingers.
- **Mind Shift** is based on helping children and adolescents to cope with anxiety and depression by acting as a coach that guides users through challenging situations.
- **Headspace: guided Meditation** is an app that helps in bringing calm and relaxation into the lives of children. It aims to keep children calm and focused through short meditation exercise. Also, it helps them to wake up and sleep peacefully.
- **Breathe, Think, Do with Sesame** is a free app that helps children learn to deal with frustrating situations using the “breathe, think, do” method. They will learn to take a long and deep breaths to calm down, think of a few strategies to handle the problem, and then do those things. They will develop resilience as they overcome challenges on their own.

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- **Mindful Powers** is one of the best mindfulness apps that aims to help children aged 7 -10 years old. It contains presentations and methods that are well suited to the targeted age group.
 - **Children's bedtime meditation for sleep & calm** is a free app that helps children to sleep peacefully. It comes with six meditations that can be added to the app purchases. It includes gentle stories, soothing music, and soft sounds to help children sleep naturally.

Online resources

- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (www.aacap.org)
- American Psychiatric Association (www.psych.org)
- Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (www.dbsalliance.org)
- Families for Depression Awareness (www.familyaware.org)
- National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (www.nami.org)
- National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems (www.naphs.org)
- Mental Health America (www.mentalhealthamerica.net)

For further information, you may visit the AACAP website or the National Institute of Mental Health website.

<http://www.aacap.org/cs/Depression.ResourceCenter>

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml>

<https://www.thehelpfulcounselor.com/18-coping-skills-strategies-for-children-and-teens/>

<http://www.aacap.org/galleries/PracticeParameters/Vol%2046%20Nov%202007.pdf>

<https://www.healthline.com/health/depression/top-iphone-android-apps>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/teen-depression/in-depth/antidepressants/art-20047502>