

So Young, So Sad, So Listen



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3rd Edition
Frontmatter
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So Young, So Sad, So Listen

A parents' guide to depression in children and young people

By
Philip Graham and Nick Midgley

Drawings by
Christine Roche

Foreword by
Philip Pullman



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Foreword to Second Edition

Depression: it hardly sounds like an illness, does it? It sounds like a mood. It sounds like something you could snap out of, with a bit of will power; like something you'd have to be feeble to give in to.

Our ancestors called it *melancolia*, or melancholy – but even melancholy sounds mild. It sounds like the sort of pleasing gentle sadness we might feel in autumn as we see the leaves turn brown and fall from the trees.

None of these names does it justice. There's nothing mild or gentle about what we call depression. In fact, at its worst, it's a savage and merciless disease. Those of us who have felt its power dread it and shun it, and know the way it can ravage and torment the mind, and pursue us unrelentingly while shutting off every avenue of escape, until there seems to be only one way out of the dark labyrinth we're trapped in: and that way is suicide.

It's a horrible thing to suffer from. It's bad enough for adults, although people who've had brushes with it can develop ways of coping when they sense it lurking nearby. Keeping busy helps, and taking exercise, and not spending too much time on our own, or in gloomy surroundings.

But it can catch children in its grip, too. Young people are just as susceptible, and it's harder for them, because they have nothing to compare it with; and sometimes it strikes when they are going through adolescence, that most confusing and stressful period, when their bodies are changing rapidly, when they are beset by all kinds of social and personal embarrassments, when sexual feelings are increasingly urgent, when every relationship is under strain. Sometimes the starting point of a bout of depression might be family problems that seem impossible to deal with – divorce, bereavement, or an abusive adult; but sometimes it strikes out of the blue, with hardly any apparent reason. Whatever the cause and wherever it comes from, if depression strikes when you're young, it strikes very hard indeed.

Why it affects some and not others is still a mystery. The important thing to remember is that there are ways to deal with it. One of the most deadly tricks of this cunning and malevolent disease is to persuade us that the hopeless despair we're suffering is our fault: that we are somehow to blame for the state we're in, that we don't deserve to live and be happy.

This is where the informed help of other people can be so important. This book is full of helpful information not only for the young sufferer, but for their friends, and for parents and teachers and other adults who deal with children. I'm glad that such a source of good advice and information exists, and I hope it will lighten many burdens.

Philip Pullman

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