

on the MOVE

DEPRESSION: "I would s

Did you ever have days when you just couldn't seem to pull yourself off the couch?

Jeremy Bellis had lots of those in the fall of 1994 — and he wasn't quite sure what was going on.

"That was kind of a blur. I wasn't motivated for anything," said Jeremy, 16, a youth-group member at St. Cecilia's Church in Irondequoit. "My grades slipped a little, from A's to B's, and I was *happy* with that."

Gradually, Jeremy became more aware that he might be in the midst of a depression. The tough times reached their low point when his father, who had been laid off from his job, considered moving the Bellis family to Atlanta.

"I would just stay up nights, crying," Jeremy said. "You don't know what it's like until you've thought about what it would be like if you didn't have any friends."

In the opinion of Jeremy's mother, Nancy, there was something even deeper eating away at him — an incident that had occurred five years earlier.

When Jeremy was 9, his 17-year-old brother, Mark, was killed in an automobile accident. Though Jeremy and his family went for professional counseling shortly after the tragedy, his mother believed that some of those ghosts were reawakened when Jeremy began attending Eastridge High School, where his brother had been a student.

"We found that several people were bringing up Mark's name to Jeremy. Teachers would say, 'Oh, I remember your brother' — and it would catch Jeremy off guard," Nancy Bellis said.

A.J. Borromei, 17, is another teen who dealt closely with death at an early age. When he was 10, his father died after a long bout with cancer. Following the death, A.J. recalled, his entire family struggled to move on with their lives.

"One of the reasons I was so depressed was because of my mom, because she missed (his father) so much," said A.J., from St. John the Evangelist Church in Greece.

Death is one of many factors that can trigger depression in teens, said Margie McMahon of The Center for Youth Services in Rochester.

"There is so much going on in adolescents; they're becoming an adult while still being a child. They're dealing with their sexuality and a lot of family problems. And families are so different today — you have grandparents and single parents raising kids," said McMahon, who serves as outreach counseling coordinator at the center. This nonprofit agency offers a variety of services for teens, including those who are depressed, suicidal, homeless or runaways.

A.J.'s mother, Jan, added that the pressure to succeed also plays a big part in many teen depressions.

"There are a lot of kids depressed because they and their families expect too much of them. They're not allowed to be young," said Borromei, the youth minister at St. John the Evangelist.

McMahon said that depression operates on many levels of severity, from bad moods to clinical depression requiring medical treatment. McMahon strongly advises that professional help be sought for anyone faced with the loss of a loved one; severe stress; or a family history of depressions.

That was the route Jeremy took two years ago, when he began revisiting the psychologist he'd seen after his brother died. After several visits, Jeremy said, his depression diminished significantly.

Jan Borromei quickly sought professional counseling for herself and her two sons after her husband died. She believes that this action helped curb depression-related complications for A.J. and his brother Sean, now 20.

"The psychologist said they were handling it very well. He said that because I coped, they coped," Borromei remarked.

However, McMahon pointed out, professional help is not always necessary in working through a depression.

"Most kids have a lot of resiliency. Often, one of the big things they need to have is a support person in their lives," she said.

For "Tom," one support person was the youth minister at his Catholic parish in suburban Rochester. Tom — who asked that his actual identity be withheld — said he often leaned on his youth minister to share

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