

## **How to really help depressed pre-school children**

**Your article, “Can Preschoolers Be Depressed?” (Magazine August 29, 2010), does a real disservice to parents of very young children because it is written in a profoundly pessimistic tone. This article is influenced by the categorical approach to diagnosis which now dominates general psychiatry—as if a diagnosis of “depression” could be made which is somehow equivalent to the diagnosis of “cardiac arrhythmia.”**

**Solely focusing on the exact categorization of a child’s symptoms is detrimental to the treatment of children where one has to take into account the complexities of the interactions among genetic, familial, and social factors in trying to understand the child and formulate an appropriate treatment plan. Part of this very important work is helping parents help their children cope.**

**The report in your article that very young children can be quite explicit about their feelings and the sources of their grief is not novel. Child psychoanalysts have known this for many, many decades and thus have been able to help depressed children through play, words, or a combination. By helping young children play, talk, and express their myriad feelings, the psychoanalyst provides both a safe forum for expression as well as special extra words which help the child master his or her unpleasant emotions.**

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