School–based Prevention of Depression and Anxiety Symptoms in Early Adolescence: A Pilot of a Parent Intervention Component

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Previous studies suggest that school–based cognitive–behavioral interventions can reduce and prevent depressive symptoms in youth. This pilot study investigated the effectiveness of a cognitive–behavioral depression prevention program, the Penn Resiliency Program for Children and Adolescents (the PRP–CA), when combined with a parent intervention component. Forty–four middle school students and their parents were randomly assigned to the enhanced PRP (the PRP–CA plus parent program) or control conditions. Students completed measures of depression and anxiety symptoms at baseline and 2 weeks, 6 months, and 1 year after the intervention ended. The combined version of the PRP significantly reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety during the follow–up period. Children assigned to the intervention condition were less likely than controls to report clinical levels of anxiety symptoms. Findings suggest that school–based cognitive–behavioral interventions that include parents may prevent depression and anxiety symptoms in early adolescence.