

Depression

In life, feeling down or miserable sometimes is normal. But if these feelings become painful, we may experience an aching heart, mind, body and spirit. We could have trouble sleeping or a change in appetite. We might withdraw from families and friends, and lose hope.

This could be depression, especially if it lasts longer than a couple of weeks.

Depression is very common. It can affect relationships with family and friends and our ability to work or go to school. It can also lead to suicide.

Signs of depression

You might be depressed if, for more than two weeks, you have:

- ✘ felt down, sad or had a low mood
- ✘ lost interest or pleasure in your usual activities.

Other common signs of depression include:

- ✘ irritability, anxiety, agitation
- ✘ crying for no reason
- ✘ no energy, tiredness and no motivation
- ✘ feeling worthless or hopeless
- ✘ feeling guilty for no reason
- ✘ problems concentrating
- ✘ loss of energy or tired all the time

- ✘ changes in sleeping or eating - too much or not enough
- ✘ weight loss or gain
- ✘ feeling lonely or withdrawing from family gatherings or friends
- ✘ thoughts of death.

If this is how you're feeling, it's important to know you can get through it with the right help.



No one thing causes depression

Depression usually comes from a combination of a recent event (like the loss of a partner) and other longer-term difficulties (like long-term unemployment or health problems).

Life events:

- ✘ long-term unemployment or job loss
- ✘ loss of a loved one
- ✘ relationship breakup
- ✘ ongoing stress – at home, work, school or financial
- ✘ being bullied
- ✘ living in an abusive environment or family violence

- ✘ history of trauma or abuse
- ✘ unable to meet obligations – family or community
- ✘ some mothers experience depression following the birth of a baby.

Personal factors:

- ✘ depression can run in families
- ✘ if you worry a lot, have low self-esteem and think negatively
- ✘ suffer from chronic pain or have a serious medical illness.

Lifestyle:

- ✘ excessive alcohol use
- ✘ recreational drug use or gambling addiction
- ✘ not sleeping well
- ✘ neglecting your health – poor diet or lack of exercise.



How to get help

You don't have to deal with depression on your own.

The most important thing to do is ask for help.

Tell someone you trust how you're feeling. It could be family, a friend or your church leader.

There are also many health professionals and services available. What's best for you depends on whether your depression is mild or more serious.

For mild symptoms self help strategies such as exercise, a healthy diet, good sleep, self help books or websites can be effective.

If you have more severe symptoms you'll need to talk to doctor, psychologist or counsellor who is trained to treat depression. Medication can also make a difference.

If you want to talk to someone confidentially or ask questions, try these free numbers.

Depression Helpline 0800 111 757.

Youthline 0800 376 633.

The Lowdown free text 5626.

You can get through this, so get help early.



Getting well and keeping well

It's important to look after yourself - mind, body and spirit.

- ✘ Learn ways to reduce and manage stress.
- ✘ Find ways to relax.
- ✘ Take care of your health by making time for exercise.
- ✘ Get enough sleep.
- ✘ Learn to communicate and skills for solving problems.
- ✘ Engage in community and cultural activities - use your culture, don't lose your culture.
- ✘ Connect - spend time with positive people.
- ✘ Find a purpose through contributions you can make to community and society.
- ✘ Communicate with others when things aren't going well.
- ✘ Maintain a sense of faith.
- ✘ Connect with your emotions through things like music, art and sports.
- ✘ Share a smile, a hug, hang out.



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