

# DEPRESSION

## What is depression?

Depression is a disorder of mood that affects a person's capacity to think clearly; occurs more than 2 weeks; undermines motivation to act; alters intimate bodily functioning, such as sleeping and eating; and leaves a person feeling stranded in the midst of searing mental pain and suffering he or she feels unable to do anything about.



## Relationship between depression, self-harm and suicide

Self-harm or recurrent thoughts of suicide are one of the behavioural symptoms of depression. However, suicide risk may also appear together with other issues such as people who are unable to bear, and suffer from pain of terminal illness/physical disability, loss and etc.

## Signs and symptoms



### Mood

1. Individuals will have low mood that has persisted for longer than two weeks
2. Continually sad, miserable, lethargic and exhausted
3. Feeling hopeless, helpless and worthless
4. Feeling irritable, angry with oneself or other
5. Feelings of emptiness or tearfulness



### Thinking

1. Individuals who tend to see themselves in a negative thought such as "nobody loves me", "I'm nothing" and "I don't even deserve to live"
2. Inability to think clearly, concentrate and make decision.
3. Thought of death or suicide



### Behavioural

1. Sleep disturbance
2. Appetite may change and drastic weight change
3. No motivation to carry out everyday activities/ stop doing the things they used to enjoy
4. Isolation from others
5. Unkempt appearance

Sometimes people with depression experience other mental health problems too, such as anxiety. Some may also experiment with alcohol and other drugs.



**"SILENCE ABOUT IT, MAKE DEPRESSION WORSE."**

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## Types of depression

### Major depression / Clinical depression

a condition that (a) is relatively persistent (e.g., symptoms occur more days than not for at least 2 weeks), (b) is associated with significant distress and impairment, and (c) includes a majority of the following symptoms: loss of capacity for pleasure (anhedonia), sadness, low energy, suicidal thoughts or behaviours, sleep disturbance, appetite disturbance, psycho-motor disturbance (slowing or agitation), concentration difficulty, and feelings of guilt or worthlessness.

### Dysthymia

is that depressed mood has persisted (most of the day, more days than not) for at least 2 years, accompanied by at least two of the following: low energy, sleep disturbance, appetite disturbance, concentration difficulty, low self-esteem, and feeling of hopelessness.

A less common form of depression is **Bipolar Disorder**. Bipolar Disorder involves cycles of depression and elation or mania.



## Dealing with depression

### Self-help

If your depression is not severe or has not lasted for a long period of time, there are many things you can do to help yourself, including:

1. Reduce or eliminate use of alcohol and drugs. These are often used to feel better, but physiologically, they can increase depression.
2. Keep up your normal routine and activities, even though you may not feel like it.
3. Eat regular and exercise regularly.
5. Get adequate sleep.
6. Seek emotional support from friends and family.

If your self-help efforts are not effective, and your depression persists for several weeks, becomes more severe, or leads to self-destructive thoughts or behaviour, you should see a counsellor.

### Professional emotional support

The two primary ways of treating depression are psychotherapy and/or medication.

#### 1) Psychotherapy/Counselling

A variety of psychotherapeutic approaches are available for treating depression. Cognitive or cognitive behavioural approaches focus on helping people change the negative styles of thinking and behaviour often associated with depression. Most mental health professionals utilise a variety of techniques based on the individual needs and wants of the client.

#### 2) Medication

Research has found that the brain goes through some changes before and during a depressive episode, and certain parts of the brain are affected. This might result in an over – or – under – production of some hormones, which may account for some of the symptoms of depression. Antidepressant medications can be effective in treating these conditions.

## How to support someone with depression

### Ask and Listen Openly

1. Take some time to talk/ check in with them.
2. Open conversations about mental illness help erode stigma and make it easier for people to ask for help.

### Encourage and Help

1. Try to encourage them to keep up the activities they enjoyed prior to the depression, particularly exercise and social activities.
2. Encourage them gently to see a counsellor. To someone with depression, these first steps can seem overwhelming. Explain that depression is a medical condition, not a personal flaw or weakness.
3. Express your willingness to help by setting up an appointment.

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