

DEPRESSION

According to the Beyond Blue website, depression is relatively common with up to one in four females and one in six males experiencing an episode in their lifetime.

All of us occasionally feel down or experience flatness in our moods. But,
if you find yourself feeling angry, sad, or numb a lot of the time
if you notice yourself withdrawing from the world and lacking in motivation
if there has been a significant change in your sleeping or eating habits
if it feels like you are living in a thick fog
then you might be suffering from depression.

IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT YOURSELF

Often when people are told they have depression, they blame themselves for the mental illness; they tell themselves they are weak, lazy or pathetic. Nothing could be further from the truth. These symptoms are depression's weapons. Depression is very skilled at disempowering people and crippling their lives. It is a real illness – you can't just snap out of it or wait it out. You need to take affirmative action. So what can you do?

The first step is to acknowledge you are suffering from a mental illness. Easy to advise, hard to do because of the stigma our society attaches to depression. But remember the statistics – many of us will suffer from a mental illness in our lifetime.

Next, try and externalise the depression. Create some daylight between it and who you are as a person. Depression can feel like it is all consuming, so you need to get some psychological distance from it. This technique is called defusing. Instead of saying, "I feel detached from life", reframe it as "depression is causing me to feel detached from life". Now you are ready to take the next step.

Remember mental illness is treatable, just like a physical illness. So begin by increasing your knowledge. Visit the websites below and start reading. Find out what you're dealing with. Then, when you are ready seek help, start by talking to a friend or a family member – someone you can trust.

Professional assistance is a big help and not something you need to be scared of. Just make an appointment with your local GP (family doctor) or pop in and see your school counsellor if you have one. If you're not sure who to talk to then you can make an anonymous phonecall to Kids Help Line using the number at the bottom of this page.

You can also employ some self-help strategies, take up gentle exercise, get plenty of sleep, eat healthy and practice meditation or mindfulness exercises. Remember, help is available, you don't have to go it alone.

NEED HELP?

SALVOS COUNSELLING

salvos.org.au/more/get-help/depression

All information on this page is provided by professional counsellors, but is not a substitute for face-to-face professional help. If you or someone you know is struggling with this issue, please seek help as soon as possible.

IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT A FRIEND

If you are helping a friend suffering from depression the trick is to stay in touch. A lot of people isolate themselves when they are in this position because they feel ashamed or embarrassed. Hang out with your friend, invite them to activities, and regularly check in with them.

If they want to talk about their struggles take the time to listen. You don't need to have all the answers and you can't stop their suffering. But your support will be of great benefit. If they don't bring up the subject you might want to look for an opportunity to express your concerns. Let them know you are worried about them and that they need to seek professional help. You might want to collect some resources and contacts to pass onto your friend and when they are ready, accompany them to an initial visit/appointment.

Be careful not to let the depression intrude into your life. It can easily burn you out if you are the only one in the supporting role. It is vital for you to have your own support in place and for your friend to have multiple sources of help, including professional assistance.]

RESOURCES

Salvos Counselling
youthbeyondblue.com
headspace.org.au
Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800

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