

## Understanding Depression

Most of us feel sad or miserable from time to time. These feelings may follow a disappointment such as a loss of a friendship, a job, or a number of stressful or difficult life events.

These feelings of sadness are very common and are experienced by everyone at some stage in their life. Generally we can recover quite quickly from our sadness, especially when we have other positive things happening in our lives.

Some people, however, continue to feel extremely sad or miserable for a prolonged period of time, even when there is no longer an obvious reason to feel this way. They begin to slip away from their usual day-to-day routine, they will appear distant, more tense, less happy and less interested.

Someone is said to be suffering from depression, when:

- their feelings of depression don't go away quickly and
- they are so bad that they interfere with their everyday life.

### Signs of Depression

Reduced appetite/weight loss Disturbed sleep Irritability Tiredness Tearfulness Worry/Fear/Anxiety Hopelessness Loss of interest/enjoyment	Reduced concentration Loss of confidence Avoidance behaviour Feeling run down – aches and pains, headaches Less organised Indecisive Low self esteem
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## Reasons for Depression

### ***Things that happen in our lives***

It is normal to feel depressed after a distressing event, such as bereavement, a divorce or losing a job and spend time over the next few weeks or months thinking and talking about it. After a while we seem to come to terms with what's happened. But some of us get stuck in a depressed mood, which doesn't seem to lift.

### ***Circumstances***

If we are alone, have no friends around, are stressed, have other worries or are physically run down, we may be more susceptible to depression.

### ***Physical Illness***

Depression often strikes when we are physically ill. This is true for life-threatening illnesses such as cancer and heart disease, but also for illnesses that are long and uncomfortable or painful, like arthritis.

### ***Personality***

Anyone can become depressed, but some are more susceptible than others. This may be due to previous life experiences which may influence how we view life in general.

### **Alcohol/Illicit Drugs**

Excessive consumption of alcohol can have an adverse effect on mood. The use of illicit drugs is not only illegal but can have a severe adverse affect on thinking and mood.

### **Genes**

Depression can run in families. If you have one parent who has become severely depressed, then you are about eight times more likely to become depressed yourself.

### **Gender**

Statistically women seem to get depressed more than men do. This is possibly because men are less likely to admit their feelings, bottle them up.

### **What to do ...**

Don't keep it to yourself – tell a friend, partner, relative or GP

If you are prescribed medication know what to expect, read the information leaflet – some anti-depressants can take from 6 to 8 weeks before you begin feeling the effects.

Remember – this didn't happen over night so it will take more than a few weeks to start feeling better.

Remember you will have good days followed by bad days – this is normal in recovery.

Try not to isolate yourself.

Try to reduce commitments in the short-term which might place added pressure on you.

Keep active – exercise can have a positive effect mentally as well as physically.

Keep a journal or mood diary.

Set a little goal each day and try to keep to a routine.

Allow yourself treats – make time for friends, buy yourself a treat, allow others to help you out, go out for a meal, see a movie

If you have access to counselling through work or via your GP make use of it. Talking to someone will stop all those worrying thoughts spinning in your head. As with medication you will not feel better after the first session – allow yourself time to recover.

Educate yourself about the illness – the more you know about the illness easier it may be to feel in control of your recovery. (see Useful Links)

**If you are feeling very bad or desperate you may need to talk to someone immediately.**

**You could consider the following:**

- **Try to get an emergency appointment with your GP explaining the circumstances.**
- **If it is out of hours contact the on-call GP service or visit your local A & E.**
- **If in work speak to your Welfare Officer/Line Manager or contact OHS for advice.**
- **Phone Samaritans - UK – 0845 7909090 or ROI – 1850609090**

### **Types of treatment**

**Medication** – your GP may decide to prescribe an anti-depressant. Always ensure you read the information leaflet and raise queries with your GP. You should inform your GP if you have any side effects or if you wish to stop taking the medication.

**Counselling/Therapy** – Also known as talking treatment, counselling or therapy will allow you the opportunity to share and explore your thoughts and emotions. This is confidential and is 'you-time'. Ask your GP about counselling or your employer may have an E.A.P facility.

**Relaxation** – Learning the technique of relaxation will enhance your ability to cope with everyday pressures. Build it into your daily routine – allowing the opportunity to unwind and de-stress.

**Consultant Psychiatrist** – Your GP may refer you to attend a specialist for further assessment and treatment.

**Community Psychiatric Nurse** – Your GP may refer you to be seen by a CPN for additional support in the community.

### **Who to contact for support**

- General Practitioner
- Staff Welfare Officer.
- Occupational Health Service
- Spiritual Adviser

### **Useful links**

#### **Samaritans**

24 hour “Confidential emotional support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which may lead to suicide”

Website: [www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

Telephone: UK – 0845 7909090

ROI – 1850609090

#### **Aware Defeat Depression**

Aware is a voluntary organisation formed in 1985 by a group of interested patients, relatives and mental health professionals, whose aims are to assist that section of the population who’s lives are directly affected by depression.

Website: [www.aware.ie](http://www.aware.ie)

Telephone: 028 712600602

#### **Relate**

Relationship counselling

Website: [www.relateni.org](http://www.relateni.org)

Telephone: 0870 242 6091

#### **N.I.A.M.H.**

Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health provides local support for those with mental health needs in locations across Northern Ireland. A wide range of services offered include housing schemes, home support, advocacy services, information services, public education and research.

Website: [www.niamh.co.uk](http://www.niamh.co.uk)

Telephone: 028 9032 8474

### **Cruse – Bereavement Centre**

“Anyone can contact cruse if they want to talk about themselves or someone they know who has been affected by a death.

Website: [www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk](http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk)

Telephone: 0870 167 1677

### **NEXUS**

Website: [www.nexusinstitute.org](http://www.nexusinstitute.org)

Telephone: 028 9032 6803

“Voluntary organisation helping people who have been sexually abused”.

Headquarters – Belfast. 3 other centres Londonderry, Enniskillen and Portadown. 2 Outreach centres – Newry and Armagh

### **Rural Support – Farmers and families**

The aim of the partnership is to provide support and assistance to farmers, their families and those living in rural areas and to raise awareness of the impact the farming crisis has had on the agricultural sector. It aims to provide understanding of how farming crisis and pressures have impacted on the health of farmers, families and communities and how help and assistance may be sought.

The Rural support telephone helpline and website was developed through the work of Armagh and Dungannon Health Action Zone’s “Healthy Lining on Farms” project team.

Website: [www.ruralsupport.org](http://www.ruralsupport.org)

Telephone: 0845 606 7607

### **Gay and Lesbian Support Cara-friend**

Providing confidential support and information and social support in helping people explore or come to terms with their sexuality.

Website: [www.cara-friend.org.uk](http://www.cara-friend.org.uk)

Telephone: Gay helpline – 028 9032 2023

Lesbian helpline – 028 9023 8668

### **Contact Youth**

“One to one counselling available to young people aged 11 – 25 years. Counselling is confidential, FREE and provided by trained, qualified counsellors who understand young peoples issues.”

Issues such as Bullying, Abuse, Family Problems, Anxiety, Sexuality, Substance Misuse, Depression, Suicide and Self-harm.

Website: [www.contactyouth.org](http://www.contactyouth.org)

Telephone: 028 9045 7848

### **Depression Alliance**

Offers help to people with depression, run by sufferers themselves.

Website includes symptoms of depression, treatments for depression and local groups. (Groups England, Scotland and Wales only)

Website: [www.depressionalliance.org](http://www.depressionalliance.org)

### **Mind**

Mind is the leading mental health charity in England and Wales and works for a better life for everyone with experience of mental distress.

Website contains useful information which you can download on depression, anxiety and other mental health problems.

Website: [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)