

# **Depression**

## **A self help guide**

*Do you feel alone? Do you feel like crying all the time? Do you lack interest in things?*

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then this self help guide aims to help you.

### **What is depression?**

Most people feel sad or depressed at times. It is a normal reaction to loss or life's struggles. Depression is a common problem. In its mildest form it does not stop you from leading a normal life, at its most severe it can be life threatening, with thoughts of death and suicide.

### **What causes depression?**

There is no single cause. It differs from person to person. Distressing events can make someone start to feel depressed, death, divorce, redundancy, living alone, low income, unemployment, illness, having a baby, getting married, moving. There are any number of life events that can trigger an episode of depression. Some people seem to be more vulnerable than others to becoming depressed. This can be due to body chemistry, family influences, early life experiences. Some people are more inclined to look on the gloomy side of life and gloomy thoughts play an important role in depression. The way we think about things affects the way we feel, which then affects the way we behave. When people suffer with depression, they mostly have negative thoughts. With each negative thought the feelings of depression increase.

### **How does depression affect us?**

It affects the way we feel: sad, guilty, numb, loss of interest and enjoyment in things, crying, feeling alone in company

It affects the way we think; we lose confidence, we expect the worse, we hate ourselves, we have thoughts of suicide, everything seems hopeless

It affects the way our body works: tired, restless, sleep problems, change in appetite, change in appearance

It affects the way we behave: normal activities stop, relationships are not pursued, we cut ourselves off from people, we become lethargic

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### **Tips to help you manage your depression**

#### **1. Make a daily plan**

Have something in your diary that needs to be done. This will help you to feel motivated to achieve at least one thing per day. Even if it is something simple as cooking a meal or exercising. Achieving a goal can give us a sense of accomplishment.

#### **2. Resist temptations**

Resist the temptation to cope with depression by drinking alcohol, misusing medication, or using illegal drugs. Although they can give some immediate release they can soon create further problems for you to cope with.

#### **3. Eat well**

A good diet can help to keep you in good health. Eating “rubbish” foods can leave you feeling rubbish as there is no nutritional value to be gained.

#### **4. Challenge negative thinking**

Do not allow gloomy thoughts to go unchallenged.

- Identify when your mood is low
- Jot down all your unpleasant thoughts
- Counter argue your thoughts. Imagine what you would say to a friend if they told you the negative thoughts they had about themselves
- Keep a diary of the things that you have enjoyed during the week as this can help you to concentrate on the good in your life.

Negative thoughts tend to be automatic and pop up out of the blue. Often the thoughts are unreasonable and unrealistic. They make you feel bad and they get in the way of life. The more you believe and accept the negative thoughts the worse you are likely to feel. Negative thoughts become exaggerated, they become over generalised and positive thoughts and events are ignored. Everything becomes personal.

#### **5. Tell someone**

Try and tell those close you how you are feeling. Most people have felt depressed themselves at some point in their life and can understand how you feel. Your loved ones would rather help you combat your depression than watch you sink so low that you contemplate taking your life.

#### **6. Talk to a professional**

If your depression feels like it is too much to bear talk to a professional. This will allow you to explore your thoughts and feelings in a safe confidential environment without fear of judgement.