

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

There is support available

- Your CLS counsellor is available to provide information on a range of issues and can help you with strategies to support someone who is showing signs of depression.
- Encourage moderate exercise, good sleep routines and a healthy diet
- Limited or no alcohol or drugs.
- Your GP is someone you can see if there are concerns about the mental health and wellbeing of someone close to you.
- If the depressed person will seek counselling and/or medical support, together with strong social and family support, a good foundation for recovery will have been established.
- Early intervention, strong social support and effective treatment will provide the best opportunity for positive outcomes.



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Depression

Support for Family and Friends
of those Affected by Depression



CHOOSE LIFE SERVICES

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Support for those who have a friend, family member or colleague with depression.

What Causes Depression?

- **Environmental factors** – stress from life events such as losing a job, sudden loss of a loved one or significant change.
- **Physical illness** – chronic illness or pain, and even medication for physical ailments can impact mental health.
- **Biological factors and genes** – we have chemicals in our brain that regulate our mood and behaviour. An imbalance in these chemicals can result in impaired thoughts and behaviours which may result in depression. It's also possible that we inherit a vulnerability to the development of depression through our genes.
- **Personality** – some people set unrealistic standards and constantly attempt to over-achieve. This can lead to depression as the unrealistic expectations may not always be met.
- **Drugs & Alcohol** – recreational drugs and alcohol can significantly increase the risk of developing depression.

We will all feel depressed from time-to-time. We may all experience the above events at one time or another. However, if stress from these events doesn't go away or quality of life has been compromised then these feelings may result in an illness that requires attention.

How does depression affect family and friends?

Most people who develop a mental illness show signs during their teenage years and into early adulthood. This is not always the case for depression. Although some people may show signs at a young age, depression can affect any person, any time.

Depression in an individual can have a substantial flow-on effect for friends and family and this can be made worse if loved ones have a limited understanding of the causes and symptoms of depression. Uncertainty, tension, confusion and conflict can result if a person's behaviour and demeanour change without any explanation.

We all have busy lives, and to have the added stress of supporting a friend or family member who seems consistently depressed is not easy. Taking on such a task is made even more difficult if there is limited knowledge and awareness of the presenting issue.

Where do we begin?

- Start by acknowledging they are not simply 'having a bad day' and there is a problem that is real and potentially much more serious.
- Adopting a positive and supportive attitude is essential.
- Visit a Counsellor or General Practitioner (GP) together, attempt to find a balance between being supportive and encouraging them to remain independent when possible.
- Encourage conversation and talk as much as possible and communicate any and all feelings and thoughts.
- Set small achievable goals together, be sure to acknowledge the effort being made to achieve these goals (whether they are achieved or not).
- Most importantly, be aware of your own mental and physical health – exercise, participate in self-care activities and be aware there are limits to what you can do.

Signs and Symptoms

It's important to remember that we all experience some of these symptoms from time to time, and it may not necessarily mean we are depressed. Equally, not everyone who is experiencing depression will have all of these symptoms.

Behaviour

- not going out anymore
- not getting things done at work/school
- withdrawing from close family and friends
- relying on alcohol and sedatives
- not doing usual enjoyable activities
- unable to concentrate

Feelings

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| • overwhelmed | • guilty |
| • irritable | • frustrated |
| • lacking in confidence | • unhappy |
| • indecisive | • disappointed |
| • miserable | • sad |

Physical

- tired all the time
- sick and run down
- headaches and muscle pains