



Understanding Depression

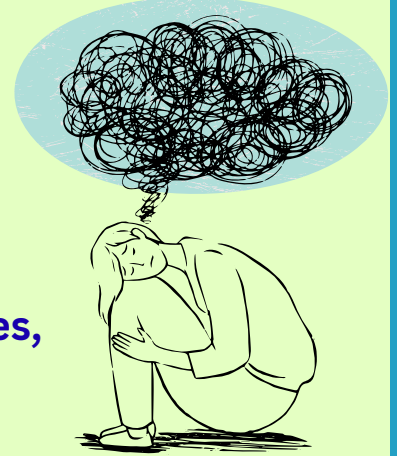


What is Depression?

Depression is a complex mental health disorder characterised by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and a lack of interest or pleasure in activities that you once enjoyed.

It affects how you think, feel, and handle daily activities, such as sleeping, eating, or working.

While everyone experiences sadness at times, depression is more than this; it is a serious condition that can impact every aspect of a person's life.



Symptoms of Depression

Symptoms are different for everyone however some common symptoms are:

- low mood, feeling sad, irritable or angry;
- having less energy than usual;
- losing interest in things you normally enjoy;
- not being able to focus or concentrate in the same way;
- becoming more tired and lethargic;
- difficulties with your usual sleep patterns;
- losing interest in eating or food;
- feeling bad about yourself, losing your confidence;
- feeling worthless and that you are letting others down;
- losing interest in intimacy;
- losing weight;
- thoughts of self harm or suicide.



Causes of Depression

There is no one cause of depression and it is often due to many overlapping reasons. However, contributing factors may come under the following categories.

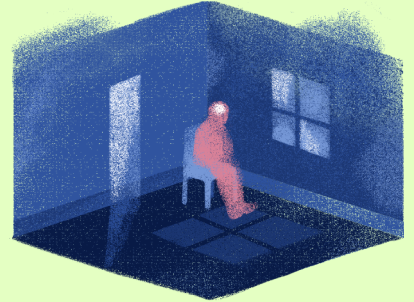
Life Events. Bereavement; illness; work issues; relationship breakdown; childhood abuse; trauma can all contribute to developing depression.

Genetics. Depression can run in families and this can increase the risk.

Brain and Biology. Chemical imbalances; hormones and pregnancy can all be a factor in developing depression.

Physical Health. Particularly if you suffer with a chronic illness or a severe medical condition.

Psychological and Lifestyle. Personality traits, lack of support, social isolation, poor sleep, unhealthy living habits and lack of physical exercise can all contribute to depression.



Types of Depression

There are different types of depressive conditions which your GP or Psychiatrist may diagnose you with. Some of the main ones are outlined below.

Clinical Depression

This is generally the main type of depression diagnosed by your GP. It occurs when you have persistent sadness and low mood for a period of over two weeks.

Recurring Depressive Disorder

People with this form of depression can go through periods of being emotionally stable before the depression recurs.

Perinatal/Postnatal

This type of condition affects some women during and after pregnancy.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

This type of depression follows the patterns of the year and typically affects sufferers in the winter time when the days are shorter.



Manic Depression/Bipolar Disorder

Now more commonly known as Bipolar Disorder, this condition is characterised by the extreme swing between high moods (mania) and low moods (depression)





Self Care and Management



How you practice self care and manage your symptoms and overall wellbeing will be different for everyone. These are some suggestions.

Talk/Get Support. This may be through talking to a friend; your GP; a therapist. One of the key things it to know you are not alone and to reach out to someone.

Break it Down. Depression can remove our motivation, interest and energy levels. If we break tasks or activities into small 5 minute bursts of movement, this can help them feel less overwhelming.



Move. A short yoga routine or a walk outside can help to boost endorphins which improve our mood. Any activity does not need to be intense.



Celebrate the Small Wins. Depression can make the smallest of tasks feel impossible. When you do achieve something such as; making a cup of tea; having a shower etc, feel proud of yourself.



Sleep. Depression can make us sleep more, so try and stick to your usual sleep routine and avoid lengthening the time that you are spending in bed.



Eat Healthily. We can lose interest in food or stick to foods that might 'cheer us up' temporarily when we are depressed. However, sticking to a healthy, balanced diet will support our physical and mental wellbeing.



Be Mindful. Use practices such as meditation; mindful colouring; journaling as a way to help clarify, express and process your thoughts. It can also help to clear your mind and reduce stress and anxiety.



Believe in You. Being in the depths of depression is scary and we can worry as to when the darkness will end. But it will, because you have the tools that you need to get through it. Sometimes you need to remind yourself of this.



Talk. I know that I have put this one on twice, but it is to emphasise the importance of sharing how you are feeling with someone you trust. Seeking support when you most need it is a strength. It can be challenging and scary, but talking about what is happening for you can make such a huge difference.



Produced by Dragonfly Counselling Service

