

What
EVERYONE
SHOULD KNOW
about
depression

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What is DEPRESSION ?

It's a common **MOOD DISTURBANCE**

– feelings of sadness, disappointment or loneliness that can lead to:

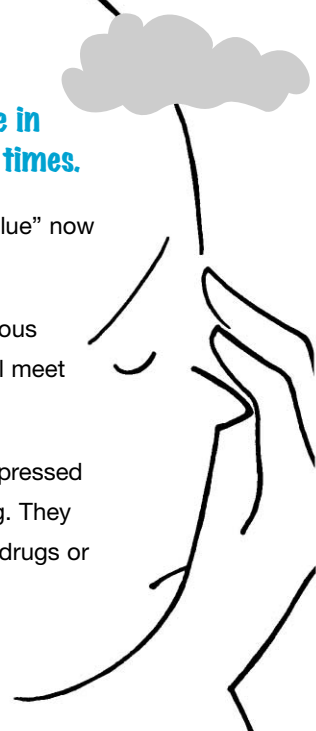
WITHDRAWAL from people and activities.

LOSS OF PLEASURE and enjoyment of life.

PHYSICAL DISCOMFORT, aches, pains, fatigue, poor digestion, sleep disturbance, etc.

Depression affects everyone in different ways at different times.

- **Most people** feel down or “blue” now and then.
- **Many people** have more serious periods of depression, but still meet daily responsibilities.
- **Some people** become so depressed that they can't face daily living. They may abuse alcohol and other drugs or become suicidal.



Depression is a
**COMMON
PROBLEM**
in Ireland today

Mild depression is our most common emotional disturbance. Serious depression affects 1 person in 5 at some time.

And yet - **DEPRESSION IS WIDELY MISUNDERSTOOD**

It is often ignored or untreated.

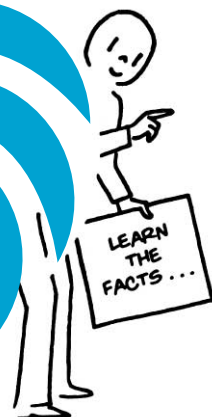
People don't recognise their symptoms, are afraid to seem "weak", or are too depressed to take action.

Everyone involved suffers.

Untreated depression can disrupt work, family relations and social life.

But
**DEPRESSION
CAN BE TREATED
SUCCESSFULLY!**

Most people
can start feeling well again
in a few weeks.



Depression can **AFFECT ANYONE** at any time.

ELDERLY PEOPLE

commonly get depressed due to physical problems, retirement, loss of loved ones, etc.

MIDDLE AGED ADULTS

– goals that seem unattainable, children leaving home, etc, may trigger depression.

YOUNG ADULTS

frequently become depressed as they struggle with job and family responsibilities and search for fulfilment.

ADOLESCENTS

experience social stress and physical changes that often lead to wide mood swings.

CHILDREN

– even babies – can suffer from depression. It is usually related to family conflicts and symptoms quickly pass. However, children can suffer severe depression – so don't ignore symptoms.



MARRIED PEOPLE

may experience depression due to interpersonal conflicts.

WOMEN

are twice as likely as men to be **diagnosed** as depressed; but it isn't known whether this is because of biological or cultural differences.

CAUSES of depression

One or several of these factors may be involved...

PERSONALITY TYPE

People who are highly self-critical, very demanding or unusually passive and dependent may be prone to depression.



ENVIRONMENTAL STRESSES

Problems at home or work, loss of or separation from a loved one, etc., can cause depression.



BIOCHEMICAL FUNCTIONS

Hormonal or chemical imbalances in the brain influence mood and can cause depression. Illness, infection, drugs or alcohol can also lead to depression.



GENETIC PATTERNS

The tendency to suffer from some type of depressive illness can run in certain families. Some studies indicate that a bio-chemical tendency to depression may be genetic.



TYPES of depression

There are many ways to classify depression. One simple and useful method is by DEGREE OF SEVERITY.



MILD DEPRESSION (the “blues”)

This is the most common type of depression. It is usually brief and doesn't seriously interfere with normal activities..

- Significant events such as holidays or a new job, as well as boredom and frustration, can produce a “down” mood.
- Postnatal depression (after giving birth) is a common type of mild depression. However, it can become severe, so talk to your doctor if necessary.

Treatment is usually not needed. A change of situation, pace, etc, is usually enough.



MODERATE DEPRESSION (feeling hopeless)

Symptoms are similar to mild depression, but more intense and longer lasting.

- An unhappy event such as loss of a loved one or career setback is usually the cause. Person is unaware of unhappy feelings, but can't always stop them.
- Daily activities may be harder (but usually still possible).
- Suicide may be a danger. It may seem like the only "solution" as pain gets worse.

Qualified help may be necessary.



SEVERE DEPRESSION (separation from reality)

Loss of interest in the world and serious prolonged behavioural changes are characteristic.

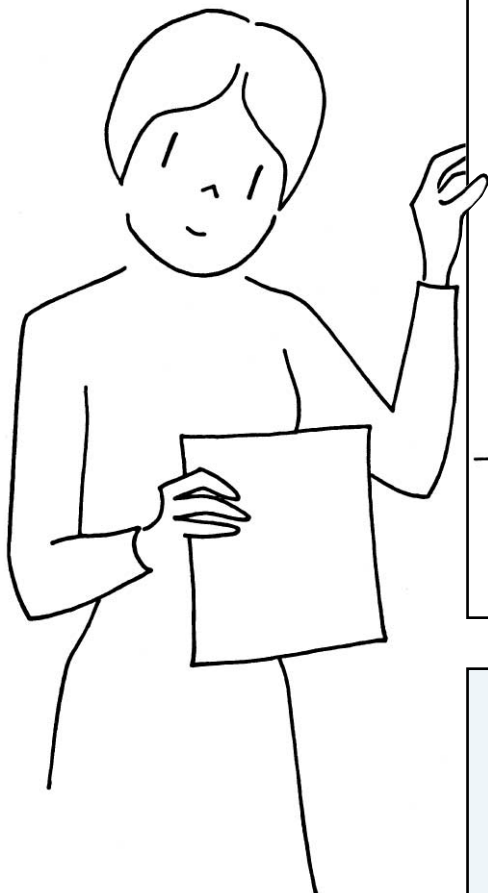
- Deep inner imbalances are usually the cause. Sometimes another disorder such as schizophrenia or alcoholism may be related.
- Physical symptoms often become obvious. The person may suffer from delusions that his or her body is changing.
- Manic-depressive illness is a form of depression in which the person goes from extreme highs to deep lows.

Qualified treatment is necessary.



SYMPTOMS of depression

There's a **BROAD RANGE** of symptoms which may be experienced.



CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDE

- General slowing down, neglect of responsibilities and appearance, loss of appetite, agitation, pointless over-activity.
- Poor memory, inability to concentrate.
- Irritability, complaints about matters that used to be taken in stride.



EVERYONE

experiences some or all of these symptoms at some time.

DIFFERENT FEELINGS, PERCEPTIONS

- Emotions flatness or emptiness, inability to find pleasure in anything, hopelessness.
- Loss of sexual desire, of warm feelings for family and friends.
- Exaggerated self-blame, guilt or loss of self-esteem, sometimes leading to suicidal thoughts or actions.



PHYSICAL COMPLAINTS WITH NO ORGANIC CAUSE

- Sleeping disturbance, such as early-morning wakefulness, sleeping too much, insomnia.
- Chronic fatigue, lack of energy.
- Unexplained headaches, backaches, similar complaints.
- Digestive upsets: stomach pain, nausea, indigestion, changes in bowel habits.

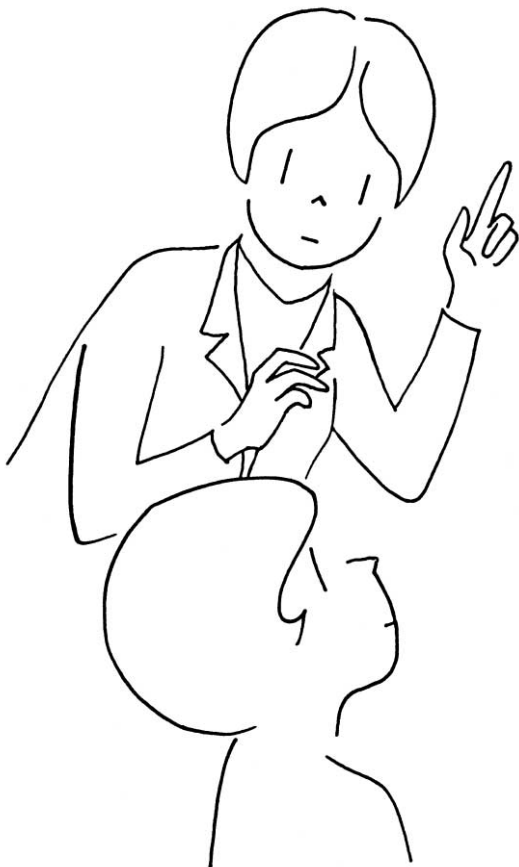


But when symptoms are SEVERE and LASTING, so that pain and problems outweigh pleasure much of the time, then it's time to get QUALIFIED HELP.

TREATMENT of depression

As with most illnesses, treatment is most effective when it's begun EARLY.

A COMBINATION of these methods may be used...



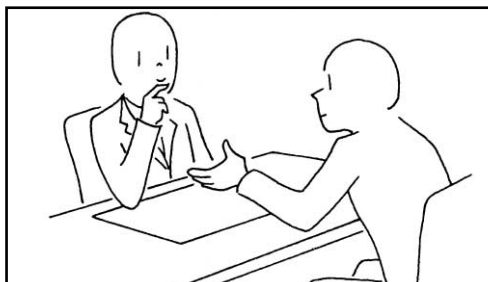
MEDICATION

is often used, sometimes bringing relief in 3-4 weeks. Drugs prescribed may include:

- **antidepressants** to correct shortages or imbalances of certain chemicals in the brain.
- **minor tranquillisers** to provide temporary relief from fears, anxiety, etc.
- **stimulants** to help correct chemical imbalances.

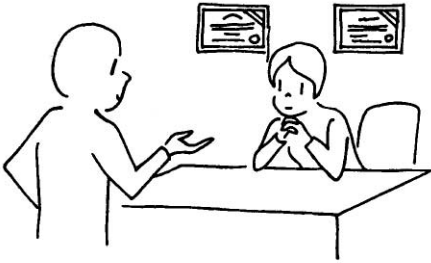


Drug interactions can be dangerous. Patients should inform doctors of medications or drugs they're taking (including alcohol), follow instructions, and report side effects.



PSYCHOTHERAPY

includes individual counselling, group therapy, etc. The goal is to overcome depression by providing support, examining underlying causes of depression, working out solutions to problems, etc.



Amateur “therapy” from friends, family, self-help groups, etc, should be avoided by seriously depressed people.

ELECTROCONVULSIVE THERAPY

(ETC or electroshock)

is occasionally used in treating very severe depression, when other form of therapy haven’t helped.



ASK YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE

if you’re interested. “Complementary medicine” describes natural therapies that aim to revitalise a patient’s self-healing capacity. the term includes acupuncture, chiropractic, herbalism, homeopathy, naturopathy, osteopathy and others.

**For further information, contact: Institute of Homeopathy Medicine
Phone: (01) 679 4208**

THE PEOPLE WHO TREAT DEPRESSION



A doctor can treat some cases of depression and refer patients to other health care professionals. Many people are treated individually or in a group by therapists.

PSYCHIATRISTS

are medical doctors with special training in helping those with emotional and psychological problems. They can diagnose illness, counsel patients, prescribe medication, etc.

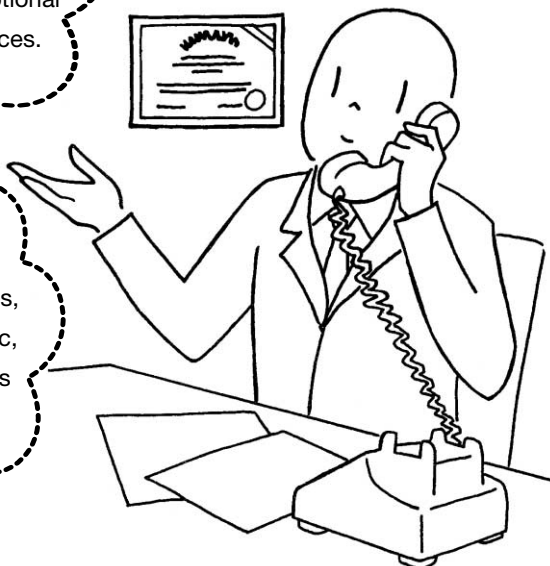
PSYCHOLOGISTS

have expertise in testing, diagnosing and treating emotional and psychological disturbances.



COUNSELLORS

include psychiatric nurses, clergy, social workers, etc, who are trained in various counselling techniques.



WHERE TO GET HELP



FAMILY DOCTORS

are the first people to contact when seeking professional help. Your doctor may refer you to other sources of help.

GENERAL HOSPITALS

are often available for short-term, intensive psychiatric care for acute problems.

AWARE

can give valuable advice and help to depressed people.

Tel: (01) 676 6166

SAMARITANS

befriend the despairing and suicidal at their centres any day or evening, or by telephone 24 hours a day.

SOME ACTION YOU CAN TAKE

if you or someone you know is feeling “down”...



SEE A DOCTOR

for a complete check-up and discussion of symptoms.

TAKE A BREAK

with a day or evening out, a trip, etc.

TALK THINGS OVER

with a friend. When there's a specific problem, discuss it with those involved, if possible.

GET SOME EXERCISE

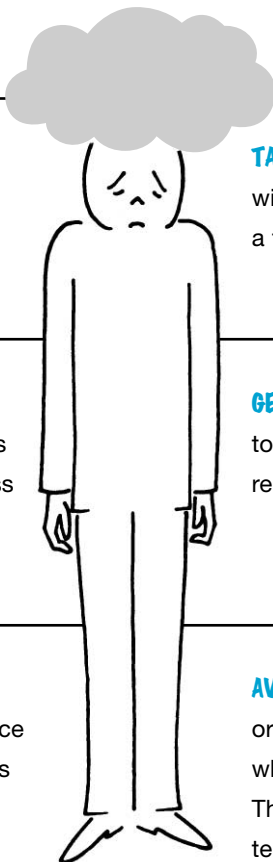
to help work off tension, relax, sleep better.

TRY TO RELAX

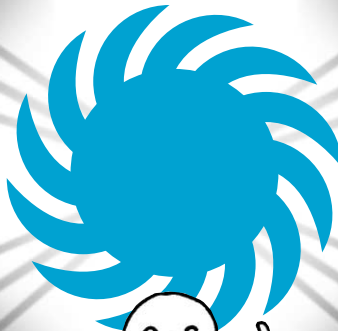
Just a few minutes of peace and quiet every day makes a big difference. Try it!

AVOID EXTRA STRESS

or big changes, especially when feeling “down”. They can create too much tension.



So - DEPRESSION DOESN'T HAVE TO RUIN LIVES!



- **UNDERSTAND THE FACTS** about depression - causes, types, treatments.
- **KNOW WHERE TO GET HELP**
- **RECOGNISE THE SYMPTOMS** that demand prompt attention.
- **SEEK QUALIFIED HELP** if depression is severe or persistent.

WHAT EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT DEPRESSION

Most people will feel down or 'blue' now and then. Like anyone else, people with MS may have reduced energy and may experience changes in eating and sleeping habits, sometimes simply finding that they enjoy themselves less. MS is not a mental illness, (although it is not uncommon that early signs of MS are mistaken for depression). There are occasions, however, when living with MS can include feelings of hopelessness and despair. Periods of physical illness, which may be accompanied by the stresses at home or at work, can lead to an experience 'as if' having been left behind as life passes by. When this becomes unbearable it can result in depressive illness, and help is needed. Depression can also affect family members because they feel emotionally drained and need the support of a trained counsellor in order to continue to cope.

If the symptoms of depression occur it is important to pay attention to your physical, medical and medical and mental health needs.

- Take care of yourself **physically** by getting enough rest, eating well, and exercising regularly.
- Take care of yourself **medically** by working with your health carers to get the most out of your treatment.
- Take care of yourself **mentally** by finding people with whom you can talk and from whom you can get emotional and psychological support.

This booklet describes how depressive illness expresses itself and the information contained here points the way forward towards recognising the signs and seeking the appropriate help. Plainly put, depression doesn't have to ruin lives.

TOM O'BRIEN

Counsellor



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