

Symptoms of depression

Introduction

Everyone has experienced feelings of depression at one time or another. Each person's experience of depression is different as there is a wide variety of symptoms. Many people feel down occasionally, or go through bad patches, but have areas in their lives that make them feel good, and like things about themselves. For some people though, life is more of a struggle. They feel bad about themselves and their lives in most ways. At times they feel complete despair. If you feel like this, then you may be depressed.

What is depression?

Depression is prolonged and persistent mood which can colour and interfere with many aspects of one's life. It is characterised by feelings of worthlessness, excessive guilt, loneliness, sadness, hopelessness, self-doubt and guilt. Suicidal thoughts may also be present. Normal everyday depression can last for a few minutes to a few days. We've all felt these periods of being "down" or "sad". These feelings are a normal part of being human. On the other hand, depression that becomes intense and lasts for extended periods of time is beyond the everyday sort. For this more severe depression you need to consider getting help.

What may cause people to be depressed?

- Significant loss
- Feeling a loss of control over life events
- Unrealistic expectations
- Disappointment
- Negative thinking

Emotional symptoms

- Sadness
- Anxiety
- Guilt
- Anger
- Mood swings
- Helplessness
- Hopelessness

Physical symptoms

- Sleeping too much or too little
- Over-eating or loss of appetite
- Constipation
- Weight loss or gain
- Irregular menstrual cycle
- Gradual loss of sexual desire

Behavioural symptoms

- Crying for no apparent reason
- Withdrawal from other people and new situations
- Getting angry easily
- Being unmotivated to set or meet goals
- Loss of interest in one's physical appearance
- Loss of interest in activities which were once of interest
- Turning to drugs or alcohol

Thoughts/Perceptions may become self-defeating, e.g. feeling a failure or being overly-critical



Dealing with depression

- Keep as occupied as you can with things that really interest you
- Take regular exercise
- Do things that make you laugh
- Pay attention to your appearance to make you feel good
- Treat yourself from time-to-time
- Try to make your living environment as pleasant and comfortable as possible
- Ask for help. Others are usually very willing to listen.
- Don't hold your feelings in. Cry and get angry if you need to
- Practice challenging some of your negative thoughts, especially about yourself. Are you really a worse person or are you judging yourself too harshly?
- Make a weekly list of your positive accomplishments
- Make a weekly schedule of your daily activities and do not forget to include social activities
- Set realistic goals
- Learn to accept that everyone has different abilities and focus on your unique characteristics and positive accomplishments
- Try to know and develop your strengths
- Get professional help if symptoms persist



◆

How to help a depressed person

- Do not tell the person that you know what s/he is feeling. This may make them angry.
- Be supportive and patient
- Let the person know that you are concerned and that you will be there for them.
- Encourage the person to seek professional help if symptoms persistent and seem to interfere with activities for daily living.

Where to find help

It may be difficult to put any of the above suggestions into action if you are very depressed. If that is the case then it is important that you seek help. There are several sources of help, including:

The Student Counselling Service

Room 010. Left after the yellow stairs on the ground floor and left again.

Tel: ext. 2635 (4042635 from outside)

E-mail: aisling.obrien@ittdublin.ie

Student Health Centre:

Room 110. off first floor corridor of the main college building. Extension 2613.

E-mail: orlagh.fleming@ittdublin.ie

- Your GP
 - AWARE – Helpline 01 679 1711
-
- ◆

Some Reading

Approximately 75% of the population suffers from depression at some time in their lives. If you learn to recognise your own particular set of symptoms which tell you you're depressed, and acquaint yourself with the coping mechanisms for trying to deal with them, you can often learn to manage your depression. It is very important not to think you are weak or inadequate because you are depressed, and instead to use your resources for finding a way out of your depression. Many people find it helpful to read and learn more about the management of depression. There is a wealth of literature on the subject available in most large book shops.

Some Reading

There is a wealth of literature on anxiety in most large book shops. Below are some books which are available in the **Institute Library**:

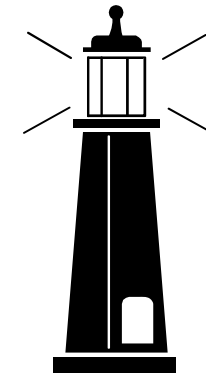
Copeland, Mary (1992) The Depression Work book.

Rowe, Dorothy (1991) Breaking the bonds: understanding depression.

Rowe, Dorothy (1991) Depression: the way out of your prison.

◆

Depression



Student Counselling Service

Student Services

Institute of Technology, Tallaght

◆