

HOW CAN I HELP MYSELF?

Be mindful of your feelings and any changes you may experience. Try to recognise the source of your feelings and name the stressors. Speaking about the problem with someone you can trust or a counsellor.

Other means of dealing with stressors involve:

- engaging in a hobby
- exercise
- avoid unnecessary stress
- get in touch with nature
- get creative
- diet
- self-care for example massage, journaling, music, relaxation, yoga, meditation, breathing exercises.

HOW CAN I HELP A FRIEND OR PEER WITH DEPRESSION?

As a concerned friend or peer, you may be a life line. Do not be afraid to speak candidly and openly about your concern for your friend's well-being as this is likely to open a door for the problems to slowly exit.

A few things to take note of when speaking with a friend or peer- **be careful not to**

- cheer the person up unnecessarily
- criticize or shame
- get angry or frustrated
- tell them to "get over it" or "everyone goes through this"
- try to fix the problem.

Rather ask your friend or peer

- how they would like to be supported -
- refer your friend to an OSS Counsellor if you are unable to assist or your friend is speaking about harming or suicide
- Seek professional help yourself should your friend refuse to access it.

WHERE TO GET HELP

Office of Student Success (OSS)

PVT Building 1st Floor
29 Princess of Wales Street
Parktown

or

OSS Satellite Office

Student Liaison Hub
4th Level
Entrance Faculty of Health Sciences



Wits Student Crisis Line

0800 111 331 (Available 24/7/365)



WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

We all feel sad and low at times. It may come when life throws us unexpected curve balls or we feel overwhelmed by our problems and feel despondent or stuck. At these times we may find ourselves pulling on our inner resources or leaning a little more on friends and family to help us get back on track.

However, if you find that you are experiencing these feelings intensely (at times with no apparent reason) and over a long period of time you may be experiencing depression. Research suggests that as many as 12% of university students experience moderate to severe symptoms of depression. These symptoms have a direct impact on physical and mental health.

Who becomes depressed?

Depression affects people of all classes, races, ages and across genders. It is estimated that 20% of South Africans will experience depression over the course of their lives however many will not seek the necessary treatment.

Why do we become depressed?

The reasons for depression are often a result of many factors. For each person, the patterns that come together to cause or prevent the onset of depression is complex. At times, the triggers are easily identifiable while at other times the triggers are seemingly absent.

Causes of Depression:

Physiology: depression is believed to be caused by an imbalance of brain chemicals. Likewise, other medical conditions, such as a stroke, Lupus, thyroid problems, certain substances (like alcohol) etc, may also cause depression.

Genetic: Having close relatives who have or

have had depression means that the susceptibility to depression increases.

External: Depression can develop as a result of adjusting to a new situation, the death of someone close, loneliness from poor relationships, financial worries, trauma, and increased stress to name a few.

Signs of Depression?

- crying uncontrollably or being emotionally numb
- change in behaviour
- change in sexual functioning
- isolating oneself
- not getting things done
- withdrawing from family and friends
- relying on alcohol and sedatives
- not doing usual enjoyable activities
- unable to concentrate
- feeling overwhelmed, guilty, irritable, frustrated
- lacking in confidence
- unhappy
- indecisive
- miserable
- tired all the time
- sick and run down
- headaches and muscle pains
- stomach churning
- sleep problems
- loss or change of appetite
- significant weight loss or gain

Having thoughts such as:

- "I'm a failure."
- "It's my fault."
- "Nothing good ever happens to me."
- "I'm worthless."
- "Life's not worth living."
- "People would be better off without me."
- "I'm a burden."

A person may be depressed if he or she has experienced several of the signs and symptoms listed above for a period of time. It is important to note that everyone experiences some of these symptoms from time to time and it may not necessarily mean that the person is experiencing depression. The degree with which someone experiences the symptoms may also vary. It is helpful to speak to a professional about the symptoms you or someone you are concerned about is experiencing in order to get the best assistance.

DEPRESSION BE TREATED

through a combination of medication (depending on the severity of the symptoms), psychotherapy, exercise, a good diet and relaxation or self-care. Additionally, finding support systems in friends and family can play an important role. Understanding the illness and provide education or advocacy is important to alleviate the stigma accompanying depression.



YOU ARE NOT ALONE!