



Depression

What it is & what to do about it...

Looking after yourself, your family & your neighbours...

Helping someone who is under pressure...

What to look for...

How to help...

Information on services...



This pamphlet is for people who want to know what to do about depression - their own, their family member's or their friends.

Anyone can become depressed. Depression is not a sign of a weak character. Nor can a person simply 'snap out of it'.

One in five patients seeing their GP has experienced depression in the year of their visit. Women present twice as often as men and Maori three times more than Non-Maori. People are becoming depressed at an earlier age and more often.

Depression is much more than just a low mood, or the 'blues' that we all feel from time to time and recover from without medical intervention.

There is still a stigma about depression and this prevents many people, particularly men, from seeking help.

Understanding depression may not solve problems. Depression can turn your sense of order in life on its head - making the process of regaining control of life and self an uphill struggle.

Two of the most disturbing symptoms of depression are that it 'saps the will' and is extremely stressful.

What causes depression?

Depression has no single cause and often involves a mixture of biological, psychological and social factors.

Different things seem to trigger depression in different people - sometimes for no apparent reason.

How is depression treated?

The best treatment process will involve a combination of

medication, therapy/ counselling and the ongoing support of family and friends.

Many of these stressors will also apply to people who work from home or do unpaid or voluntary work.

Factors that may increase the risk of depression:

- Weather - too often not doing what is needed
- Work issues such as loss of employment, too much work, unfair/unequal returns for effort, ongoing harassment and/or bullying
- A past experience of depression
- A family history of depression
- Relationship difficulties / breakdown
- Serious financial insecurity/difficulties
- Onset of a long term illness or serious accident
- Caring for someone with a long term disability
- Post natal depression
- Having a very sensitive emotional nature
- Past psychological or physical trauma
- The side effects of some medications - check with your GP
- Overuse of alcohol and/or other drugs can worsen depression.

If you think you may be depressed - ask for help - the sooner the better.

If you think you know someone who is depressed - offer to help - the sooner the better.

Symptoms of depression:

Serious depression or 'clinical' depression occurs when at least two of the following three symptoms occur daily over a period of two or more weeks:

1. An unusually sad mood that simply will not go away despite some good things happening
2. Loss of enjoyment and interest in activities usually enjoyed
3. Loss of energy and constant tiredness.

People with depression may also have other symptoms such as:

- Sleeping difficulties despite physical exhaustion, or sometimes sleeping too much
- Persistent worrying about little things, agitation, irritability and forgetfulness
- Loss of confidence and poor self-esteem
- Recurrent feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness and guilt without apparent reason
- Difficulty in concentrating and decision making
- Loss of appetite or sometimes over-eating.
- Fears about people, places and events often leading to social isolation
- Thoughts about the attractiveness of death and/or suicide

Not every person who is depressed will have all these symptoms

General information about depression:

www.depression.org.nz
www.outoftheblue.org.nz

Mental Health Matters...to note...

46% of people will suffer from a mental illness at some stage in their lives

1 in 5 New Zealanders will experience a mental illness in any given year

Mental illness can affect anyone at any time regardless of age, culture, income or gender

The vast majority of people with mental illness recover, raise their families, are productive employers or employees and contribute to their communities

For every person with a mental illness, there are many other people affected - family, friends, workmates, neighbours...

Not only do people experiencing mental illness have to cope with an illness that can radically change their lives, they often experience rejection and discrimination and this is so, so unnecessary...

A diagnosis of mental illness does not say anything about a person's capabilities, personality or future.

The vast majority of people who have some kind of mental illness get better, hold down jobs, make good partners, lovers, parents, are not dangerous and have a great deal to offer their community.

In fact, the very act of dealing with mental illness often gives people extraordinary strength of character.

Seeking professional help...

One of the biggest barriers to recovery is discrimination. This stops many people from seeking professional help.

It is also why stopping discrimination and championing understanding, respect, rights, and equality for people with mental illness is just as important as providing the best treatments and therapies.

And these are available and they do work...

If you feel that depression or anxiety or stress is adversely affecting your life or a family member or friend... the best person to see is someone with medical knowledge.

The nurse or doctor will be experienced in understanding mental health and may be able to treat you themselves.

Ideally, they will also refer you or yours to a counsellor or psychologist. While not able to prescribe medication, these two professions can provide support and coping strategies such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), and inter-personal skills that, together with medication, will help ease depression and help regain a return to normality.

Some of the education and skills learnt can make significant improvements to coping with life's challenges, now and in the future.

Helping someone with depression...

Caring, listening, acknowledging, empathising, accepting, supporting and giving time - just like any friend would - is the key to helping someone overcome depression.

For the person with depression, it can be a particularly unpleasant and very isolating experience.

GPs and other complementary health professionals are experienced and understanding in helping overcome depression.

- Learn as much as possible about depression, its treatment and how you can help the person recover.
- Give reassurance, over and over, that the depression will end.
- Maintain as normal a relationship as possible and as normal a life as possible.

- Accept the person as they currently are and have realistic expectations of them.
- Let the person know that you understand that they are in pain and suffering from a very treatable illness, not a personal weakness.
- Express affection, show you care, respect and value the person.
- Gently encourage - without pushing - the person to get involved with activities they used to enjoy.
- Keep pointing out signs of improvement as the person may not recognise them.
- Be patient - getting better will take time. In the meantime, look after yourself as depression can be contagious.
- And never ignore signs that the depressed person is thinking about suicide - a symptom of depressive illness.

If you feel someone with depression may be feeling suicidal...

If a person is feeling so overwhelmed and helpless about life events that the future appears hopeless, they may consider that suicide is a logical solution to their problems.

Please show your concern by directly asking the person if they are contemplating suicide and if they have thought about how they might do it.

If the person does have a plan, assess if they have the means to carry it through.

If you believe the person may commit suicide, immediately seek professional help by calling the **Taranaki District Health Board's Crisis Service on: 06-753-6139** and stay with and support the person until the Crisis team arrive.

Other avenues for information and support include:

Like Minds Taranaki: Ph 0800 4 LIKE MINDS
Tel: 06-759-0966 or Email: mental.health@xtra.co.nz

Like Minds National Office HELP LINE:
24 hour service - Ph 0800-102-107

Depression Helpline: Ph 0800-111-757

Hauora Taranaki (PHO): Ph 06-759-4364

Lifeline Tele Counselling: Ph 0800-5433-54

Mensline: Ph 0800-636-754

Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand National Info. Services and Resource Centre:
81 New North Rd, Eden Terrace, Auckland 1021.
Email: resource@mentalhealth.org.nz
Ph 09 300 7030

Supporting Families Taranaki: Ph 06-757-9300

Taranaki District Health Board: Ph 06-753-6139

Youthline Ph 0800-376-633



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