

# Depression

Do you sometimes wonder whether you are depressed or whether you are just having the blues?

## Why do people get depressed?

Depression is very common. Anyone can get low or feel "down in the dumps" sometimes, but someone is said to be depressed when these feelings do not go away quickly or become so bad that they interfere with everyday life. Winston Churchill called it his "black dog."

## Clinical self-test

- Have you had persistent feelings of sadness, emptiness, pessimism or anxiety most of the day nearly every day?
- Have you lost interest or pleasure in all, or almost all, activities most of the day, nearly every day?
- Have you had significant weight loss or weight gain or an increase or decrease in appetite nearly every day?
- Have you had insomnia (not sleeping) or hypersomnia (oversleeping) nearly every day?
- Have others noticed that you are restless or lethargic nearly every day?
- Have you noticed that you have a loss of energy and fatigue nearly every day?
- Have you had feelings of worthlessness or excessive or unjustified guilt nearly every day?
- Have you noticed that you have difficulty concentrating or thinking, or in making decisions nearly every day which you have noticed or others have noticed?
- Have you had recurring thoughts of death (not just fear of dying), recurring thoughts of committing suicide but without a specific plan; or have you made a suicide attempt; or do you have a specific plan for committing suicide?

IF YOU HAVE ANSWERED "YES" TO AT LEAST FIVE OF THESE QUESTIONS, YOU MOST LIKELY NEED TO SPEAK TO A PSYCHOLOGIST OR GP AT THE STUDENT WELLNESS SERVICE.

Remember that early treatment could lessen the severity of the depression and may prevent future episodes!!

### **IMPORTANT NOTE:**

- Physical symptoms such as muscular pains, constant headaches or sleeplessness can be the first signs of the onset of depression.
- If you have recently lost someone and are still grieving, then it is normal to feel depressed.
- The self-test is not valid if you recently had excessive alcohol intake or have used other drugs.

### **What could you do to feel better?**

- Do not keep it to yourself. If you've had some bad news or a major upset – tell someone close to you.
- Treat yourself well – quieten your critical inner voice and forgive yourself for mistakes.
- Do something – moderate exercise such as walking will help you to keep physically fit and may help you to sleep better. Even if it does not work, it is always good to keep active.
- Eat well. You may not feel like eating, but try to eat regularly. Fresh fruit, vegetables, low fat protein such as fish, chicken breasts, beans, etc. are particularly helpful. Note: Overeating simple carbohydrates (e.g. sugary, refined foods) is said by some people to make you feel worse.
- Beware of alcohol! Try not to drown your sorrows. It may make you feel better for a short while, but it actually makes the depression worse.
- Beware of Cannabis! While Cannabis is said to help you to relax, evidence suggests that it can bring on depression.
- Keep hopeful! Depression can sometimes be helpful! You may come out of it stronger and better able to cope. It can help you to see relationships and situations in a different and more positive way.
- Take the antidepressant medication if it was prescribed by your doctor. Remember that some antidepressants take two to three weeks to start working properly.

### **How can I help someone that is depressed?**

- Listen. You may have to hear the same thing over and over again.
- It is best not to offer advice unless it is asked for.
- Just spend time with the person. You can encourage them, help them to talk, or help them to keep doing the things they would normally do.
- You can reassure the depressed person that they can get better.
- Make sure that they are eating healthily.
- Help them to stay away from alcohol.
- Take them seriously if they are getting worse or are speaking about harming themselves. Make sure that they tell their Psychologist or Doctor.
- Encourage them to accept help.
- Do not discourage them from taking medication or seeing a Psychologist.

## Find us @

### **Student Wellness Services**

**28 Rhodes Avenue**

**Mowbray**

### **Telephone Numbers:**

- **021 650 1017**
- **021 650 1020**

### **Hours:**

**Mon – Fri 08H30 – 16H30**

## Extra resources:

- Crescent Clinic: 021 762 7666/7/8
- Kenilworth Clinic: 021 763 4500
- ER 24: 084 124
- Anxiety and Depression Support Groups: 021 557 6066
- Cape Mental Health Society: 021 447 9040
- Groote Schuur Psychiatric Unit: 021 404 2155/1 (Ward G22 / C23)
- LifeLine: 021 461 1111

**be informed**

**know the dangers**

**make an informed choice!!**