

# DEPRESSION

Depression is a disturbance in mood marked by a deep sense of sadness. It can be quite pervasive, affecting many or all aspects of your life. The ability to recognize depressive symptoms and/or patterns in yourself and in others will help you to deal with it more effectively and take appropriate action.

## Symptoms of depression

### 1. Changes in Feelings

- depressed mood and feelings of emptiness.
- helplessness and/or hopelessness.
- feeling worthless.
- exaggerated sense of self blame and or feelings of guilt e.g. "It's all my fault".
- crying spells or lack of emotional response (i.e. I just feel numb).
- loss of warm feelings towards family and friends.
- feeling overwhelmed easily.

### 2. Changes in behaviours

- academic and or work difficulties.
- loss of interest in activities.
- isolation from important significant people in your life.
- lack of energy and fatigue.
- Irritability and complaining.
- being in a bad mood more often than not.
- not able to complete everyday tasks and activities.
- increased alcohol or drug use.
- loss of sexual desire.

### 3. Changes in thoughts

- persistent negative perception or thoughts.
- suicidal thoughts.
- difficulty in concentrating and remembering.
- difficulty in making decisions.

### 4. Physical complaints

- change in sleeping and eating habits.
- other difficulties e.g. upset stomach, diarrhea or persistent headaches.

## Why does someone become depressed?

There are many reasons why people will become depressed. Some common causes of depression (especially for students) are: **a loss of a significant relationship, leaving home, academic difficulties, parental conflict, concerns about the future.**

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## Enquiries

**Student Counselling Career and  
Development Centre  
Nelson Mandela University**

<http://counselling.mandela.ac.za>

[counselling@mandela.ac.za](mailto:counselling@mandela.ac.za)



[mandela.ac.za](http://mandela.ac.za)

# Understanding Depression

Other environmental and even possible chemical or biological factors may also play a role in the causation of depression.

Genetic factors have been shown by research to play a role in the development of depression. So, if there is a history of depression in your family, be alert to possible signs in yourself.

### What should I do if I feel depressed?

Almost everyone feels depressed at one time or another. And, more often than not, most people return to their normal functioning at some point.

Take time to assess why you are feeling the way you are feeling. Feeling sad or depressed in most cases is an expected and appropriate reaction to a stressor or situation. However, when these feelings become overwhelming, too intense, last for an extensive period of time, or significantly interfere with your ability to function, it might be wise to make efforts to change your situation. Some ideas may be to:

- ◆ give yourself a break from the stressful situation and/or event.
- ◆ seek out the support of friends and/or family.
- ◆ engage in activities that you enjoy.
- ◆ consider making changes to your routine and try to become more involved.
- ◆ avoid making long term commitments or decisions until you are feeling clearer and more level-headed.
- ◆ take things day by day and attempt to accomplish small goals as opposed to wanting to solve everything at once.
- ◆ make certain you engage in an enough exercise, get proper nutrition and sleep.

### Treatment for depression

**Should feelings of depression persist or worsen, it may be advisable to seek help from a Student Counsellor or another mental health professional.**

Depression is treatable with **counselling** and/or **medication**:

- \* Medication can correct the chemical imbalance that is found in people with symptoms of clinical (severe and prolonged) depression.
- \* Counselling provides an opportunity to discuss your difficulties and will enable you to cope more effectively with matters that are contributing to your depression.

### Effects of depression on relationships

In a relationship the desire to isolate yourself from your partner can cause negative effects on the relationship. Depression can also lead to rejection where the depressed person feels unloved and rejected.

This happens because:

- ◆ Depressed persons are less responsive to others.
- ◆ Depressed persons are less likely to satisfy others needs for approval and interest.
- ◆ Depressed persons are less likely to conform to behaviour expected in social situations.
- ◆ Impaired social skills are both the cause and the result of depression. Problematic social behaviour can contribute to interpersonal conflicts that plunge a person into depression.

### How can I help someone who is depressed?

You can benefit from being aware of the cycle that depressed persons find themselves in and develop a sense of patience.

Some factors to consider are:

**1. Counselling focused on interpersonal relationships** has been especially helpful in the treatment of depression.

**2. Remain supportive.** Blaming the depression on the person, trying to make them "snap out of it" and other confrontational techniques can backfire and make the situation worse. It is important to first let the person know that you are concerned about him or her and want to help. It may be helpful to state specifically what behaviour (s) you have noticed that is of concern. For e.g. 'I noticed that you have not left your room for the past few days and you have not been going to class.'

**3. Listening to the person without judging.**

**4. Recommending that the person contact a mental health professional for assistance.**

If the person is suicidal it is okay to talk about the suicide directly. One does not increase the risk of suicide by asking about it. The individual may in fact feel relief in being able to admit to thoughts of taking his or her own life.

In attempting to help someone who is depressed, it is very normal to experience feelings of anger, frustration and helplessness. If you need some assistance and support in dealing with someone close to you who is depressed, talk to a counsellor. It is important to note that if depressive symptoms persist over a week, it is advisable that professional help is sought.

### Who can I contact?

**Please contact the Student Counselling Career and Development Centre on your campus if you need any assistance.**

**If you would like to make an appointment, telephone or call in at our Reception area.**

### SCCDC (Office hours 08:00 to 16:30)

South Campus: **041 504 2511**  
North Campus: **041 504 3222**  
Missionvale Campus: **041 504 1106**  
Second Avenue Campus: **041 504 3854**

### Campus Health

South Campus: **041 504 2174**  
North Campus: **041 504 3364**  
Missionvale Campus: **041 504 1374**  
Second Avenue Campus: **041 504 3762**

### Emergency Contact Details

**For after hours emergencies contact:**

Mandela University Protection Service: **041 504 2009** or **041 504 3483**

Provincial Hospital Casualty Department: **041 392 3911**

Greenacres Hospital Casualty Department: **041 390 7000**

Livingstone Hospital: **041 405 9111**

Suicide Emergency Line: **0800 567 567** or **SMS 31393** for a call back

Life Line (24/7 counselling): **0861 322 322**

Ambulance: **10177** or Police: **10111**

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