



Depression

Many people will experience a form of depression during their lifetime. The main thing to remember is that having depression is not a sign of weakness and recognising that you are suffering from depression is the first sign of taking a positive step towards recovery. With the right treatment and support most people can overcome depression.

Useful information about depression

- One in five adults will have depression in their lifetime.
- Doctors diagnose two million cases in the UK per year.
- On average a GP sees one patient with depression per day.
- Depression can affect all age groups.
- Twice as many women are diagnosed with depression than men.

Do I have depression?

We can all feel sad from time to time and ups and downs are typical for many people. Those who have depression feel they should be able to 'snap out of it' but this is not the case with depression as it is more than just feeling down or blue.

Feeling sad and low can last for months to years and affects day to day functioning as well as preventing a person from living each day to the fullest. You may feel upset sometimes but find that you work through these feelings and are able to cope successfully. If however, these feelings of sadness remain and prevent you from functioning, you may be suffering from depression.

Emotional Symptoms

The emotional symptoms of depression can be overwhelming. Intense feelings of sadness, hopelessness and helplessness may occur. Many people lose interest in daily activities and feel displeasure from the activities they once use to enjoy. Other symptoms can include:

- Feeling guilty
- Crying
- Anger
- Irritability
- Anxiety

Wendie Ralphs BA (Hons) BACP (Accred)

Tel: 01530 510591

E-mail: wendie@butterflycounselling.com

www.butterflycounselling.com



- Loss of self confidence
- Excessive / Unrealistic fear
- Brooding about the past
- Feeling pessimistic
- Excessive self criticism
- Suicidal thoughts

Depression doesn't just involve changes in how a person feels and thinks-it can also leave an individual with a range of physical symptoms. A depressed person may feel exhausted, extremely fatigued, sore, achy and generally lethargic. Many people find that they also experience weight changes as their appetite is reduced or in some cases, increased. Other physical symptoms common to depression are:

- Concentration difficulties
- Weight loss / Weight gain
- Sleep disturbance
- Energy loss
- Stomach disturbance
- Aches and Pains
- Loss of interest in sex
- Apathy
- Loss of motivation
- Withdrawal from social situations.

Types of depression explained

There are many types of depression and often anti-depressants may be required as well as some sort of self-help.

Mild - With this type of depression, moods may come and go. It may have started from a stressful life event but this may still require treatment of some kind although some kind of change in terms of lifestyle may resolve this, depending on what has brought this on.

Moderate - With moderate depression, it is unlikely that the mood will come and go; this will feel like a more constant state of mind. Physical symptoms may also be suffered and will certainly require assistance in terms of making some changes and seeking support and help.

Severe - With severe depression symptoms can be intense and will most likely include

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the emotional, physical and behavioural symptoms in one way or another. Delusions may become a feature also and medical help would definitely be recommended.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) – this expression is used to describe depression, which can be brought on by lack of daylight and can particularly be a feature in the winter. Some symptoms may be cravings for chocolate or carbohydrate and the need to sleep more.

Types of help available for depression

If you think you may have depression this is already your first step towards helping yourself and making positive changes in your life. There are various different treatments available for depression some focus on relieving the symptoms others focus on the cause of the depression and how to address it.

Medication - Your GP will discuss with you what they think is an appropriate form of treatment. These days a G.P will usually suggest medication or counselling or both. Medication can often help to reduce the symptoms of depression.

Counselling - Has been proven to be very effective particularly in the early stages and with milder forms of depression. It can help you address some of the emotional symptoms of depression such as low self-esteem, loss of confidence and general anxiety. By providing a safe space and time from the normal day to day demands, the counsellor can help you explore what is going on for you and what could be the best way forward. Counselling helps you to understand what has caused the depression as well as helping you to prevent further outbreaks of depression.

Self Help – When you are depressed you may feel unmotivated and have stopped doing the things that you enjoyed and this can make the depression worse. By taking up activities that are known to be good for us it helps lift your mood. Self-help suggestions:

- Eating a balanced diet.
- Reducing your alcohol intake as alcohol can have a depressive effect
- Taking regular exercise, this releases endorphins, helping to lift the mood
- Taking time out to relax and get away from the daily pressures
- Setting yourself small goals
- Talking to family and friends.
- Taking an herbal remedy such as St John's Wort, which is the most popular, and it can certainly be very beneficial for those suffering with mild depression.

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Where can I find out more about all this?

MIND

Mind is a charity and provides high-quality information and advice and campaigning to promote and protect good mental health for everyone

Depression Alliance

Depression Alliance is the leading UK charity for people with depression. They provide information and support services to those who are affected by it via our publications, supporter services and network of self-help groups for people affected by depression.

SANEline

SANEline raises awareness for people with mental illness and their families and secure better services. Undertakes research into the causes of serious mental illness through The Prince of Wales International Centre for SANE Research. Provides help and information to those experiencing mental health problems, their families and carers.

NHS

Provides a useful information sheet on depression.

Suggested reading

The Feeling Good Handbook

David D Burns (2000)

Overcoming Depression: A guide to recovery with a complete self-help programme

Paul Gilbert (2009)

Overcoming Depression: a Self-help guide using Cognitive Behavioural Techniques

Paul Gilbert (2009)

Mind over Mood

Padesky & Greenberger (1995)

Depression: The way out of your Prison

Dorothy Rowe (2003)

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