



DEPRESSION

WHAT IS DEPRESSION

Most people go through periods of feeling down. Usually these feelings pass in due course. Depression is more than simply feeling down or unhappy or fed up for a few days. Depression becomes a problem when low mood does not go away. It can go on and on and end up taking over our lives. As depression increases, we may not know how to improve our mood, and feelings of despair and hopelessness may begin to overwhelm us. One in four students in the UK currently experiences mental health issues (including depression, stress and anxiety or a combination of these) each year.



Each person who has depression will experience it in their own particular way. For example - you may be unable to get out of bed, avoid going to lectures, avoid other people, eat or sleep too much or too little. You may also be experience symptoms of anxiety, feeling restless, agitated or irritable. You may be feel numb and empty or blame yourself for things that are not necessarily your fault. You may be think you are useless or worthless. You may be experience a loss of ability to concentrate on everyday tasks, including your academic coursework. You may be smoke or drink or use non-prescribed drugs more than previously. You may have thoughts of death or suicide.

There are various possible explanations of what causes depression. Sometimes the cause or trigger for depression will be obvious – such as a bereavement or the break-up of a relationship. In other cases, there may be no apparent reason. How we feel about ourselves in the present may be related to many factors - such as negative childhood experiences, physical ill health, and poor diet and lifestyle choices.

It can be useful to talk things over with someone outside your immediate circle of family and friends - such as a counsellor or mental health advisor in Student Services. This takes courage. It can be a relief to get things off your chest. Counselling gives you the chance to talk through your present-day feelings and difficulties, which may be current or rooted in the past. It can help you become clearer about how you feel about your life and other people. This enables you to take greater control of your life and cope more effectively in the longer term.

GETTING HELP FROM OTHERS

- University of Abertay Counselling and Mental Health Service offers you a safe, confidential space to explore how you can tackle the symptoms of depression which are affecting your mood state and your day-to-day functioning. **You can make an appointment by emailing counselling@abertay.ac.uk.**
- The Counselling Service also has a list of resources offering help in the community which you can access online at <https://abertay.co/NmRI>
- **Samaritans free helpline 116 123 is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year** and offers confidential support for people who are experiencing feelings of distress, despair or suicidal thoughts.
- **Your GP** - your GP should have some understanding of the difficulties you are experiencing and be aware of the options available to you. Your GP may suggest a course of antidepressants and/or counselling. Antidepressants can help people with depression to feel and cope better, so they can start to enjoy life and deal with their problems more effectively again. As well as potential benefits, medication can have side-effects.

You should ask your GP to advise you about what to expect before you make a decision about taking medication. If you do start taking antidepressants you probably will not feel any effect on your mood for two to six weeks.



IN AN EMERGENCY

If you are experiencing symptoms of depression and actively considering suicide you should contact your GP surgery, say how you are feeling and ask for an urgent appointment. If you are too distressed or unable to do this yourself ask a friend or family member if they will make the call on your behalf while you are with them.

- **Outside surgery hours phone NHS 24 Scotland free of charge on 111 or go to the A&E department at your nearest hospital.**
- **At any time phone the Samaritans confidential free helpline on 116 123 - open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.**

OTHER SOURCES OF HELP

- **Student Against Depression** - information and resources for students experiencing depression - studentsagainstdespression.org
- **CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably)** - is an organisation that supports men experiencing depression - www.thecalmzone.net
- **Prevention of Young Suicide UK** - confidential help and advice for young people who are having suicidal thoughts and those close to them - www.papyrus-uk.org
- **The Royal College of Psychiatrists** – website with evidence-based information on mental health problems - <https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health>
- **NHS Scotland** - www.nhs.uk/conditions/clinical-depression
- **Galway University** have produced a YouTube video about managing depression - **SCS Asks About...Depression** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMZqXIWqrm0>
- **Depressive Illness: The Curse of the Strong** by Dr Tim Cantopher – feedback suggests this is the most informative book on depressive illness available.



ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES FOR TACKLING DEPRESSION

Depression is a debilitating, sometimes life-threatening, condition that needs to be taken seriously and dealt with promptly. If you haven't yet told anyone how you are feeling please consider doing so. Look again at the section above 'Getting help from others' for where to start. With the right strategies you can tackle your depression and find a positive way forward. This section tells you more about what you can do for yourself.

- **Healthier daily routines** – depression often affects the basics of daily life – sleeping, eating, exercising and socialising. Making small changes to build healthier daily routines can make a very big difference to how you feel.
- **Practising relaxation** - depression feeds off stress. Managing our stress better is one of the key things we can do to keep depression at bay. And the foundation for managing stress levels is knowing how to relax – like breathing exercises; muscle relaxation; swimming; running; mindfulness etc.
- **Changing attitudes** – changing unhelpful thinking patterns is one of the most effective longer-term strategies for overcoming depression and building resistance to its return. There is a range of interventions which can help; ask your counsellor or GP what they can offer.
- **Learning self-compassion** - Self compassion is the attitude which underpins all other depression-beating strategies. If we can learn to treat ourselves kindly and support ourselves through our struggles then everything else becomes a lot easier.



See the websites on the previous page for more information on how to incorporate these strategies into daily life.

THE INFORMATION FOR THIS LEAFLET HAS BEEN ADAPTED FROM THE FOLLOWING SOURCES:

- Talking about depression NHS Health Scotland (2014)
ISBN: 978-1-84485-346-5
- <http://studentsagainstdepression.org/>
- <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Depression/Pages/Introduction.aspx>
- <https://yougov.co.uk/news/2016/08/09/quarter-britains-students-are-afflicted-mental-hea/>
- <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/depression/>
- The Royal College of Psychiatrists – website with evidence-based information on mental health problems

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[abertay.ac.uk](http://www.abertay.ac.uk)

Counselling & Mental Health Service

Contact:

Student Enquiry Zone (SEZ)

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The Library Building,

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can be found at:

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