

# Depression

It's normal to feel sad, stressed, angry, or miserable, especially when we've gone through stressful times. This could be a relationship break-up, trouble with friends or family, changing schools or exam times.

Depression is more than this. Depression is being stuck with these feelings for long periods of time with little interest in spending time with others or doing things you used to enjoy. This feeling can become overwhelming, affecting how you think, how you feel and what you do.

Other changes may occur. You may have trouble sleeping, have a change in appetite, no energy, withdraw from our family and friends, have trouble concentrating or feel worthless and lose hope.

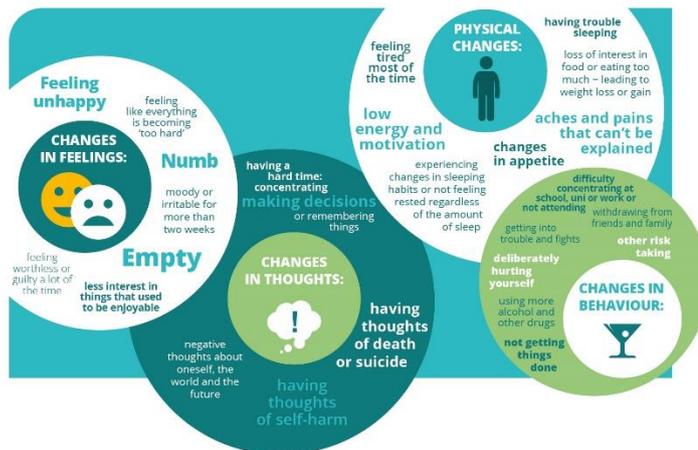
Experiencing many of these symptoms might indicate **depression**, especially if the feelings last longer than a couple of weeks.

There's no simple answer for why depression happens. For some people, it can be a mix of events or issues that end up affecting how they feel, think and act. But sometimes there's no clear reason and that's OK, too.

The good news is that people experiencing depression can get better with the right help.



## What are the signs and symptoms?



Sometimes people with depression experience other mental health problems such as significant anxiety or substance use issues.

Some young people experiment with alcohol and other drugs to help them feel good in the short term. This can leave them feeling much worse in the long term.



## What can I do?

If you are experiencing these symptoms there are several things that can help. We have listed some below.

It can feel hard to find the energy or motivation to do these things. Sometimes it might feel like nothing will help. Try starting with one thing you know you can do and then slowly adding in things step by step. This can help you feel like you're making progress.

### Take care of yourself

Looking after our minds and bodies can help us with our general mental health and wellbeing. You can:

- ✦ eat well to improve your mood, energy levels and general health and wellbeing
- ✦ sleep well to help your brain and body rest
- ✦ get moving to help boost your mood, manage stress and sleep better
- ✦ avoid, or limit your use of, alcohol and other drugs

Check out the [Feel Good](#) section of the Mental Wealth website for more advice on how to take care of yourself.

### Notice your thinking patterns

Being aware of our thoughts is an important step toward improving how we feel. When people are experiencing depression, they often get into cycles of unhelpful thinking patterns. Writing down your thoughts can help you to figure out which thoughts make you feel better or worse.

The Journal website [www.depression.org.nz](http://www.depression.org.nz) has tools that can help you to understand and work through unhelpful thinking patterns.

### Talk to someone

It's a good idea to talk to someone that you trust about your thoughts and feelings. Talking to others can help you feel understood and can also help you see things from a different point of view. You might:

- ✦ talk to your family and friends, a teacher, school counsellor, church leader, sports coach, or an Elder
- ✦ get support from online communities or resources listed on the last page of this factsheet
- ✦ connect with others and be part of a group, like a sporting club or religious group, to manage feelings of loneliness
- ✦ if you don't find the first person you talk to helpful, keep reaching out and talk to someone else.



## **Connect with friends or whānau**

When we're feeling low, sometimes we withdraw from friends or family – but this is the time to try hard to connect with them. Getting involved, spending time with them, and even doing things for them can give you a feeling of purpose and wellbeing.

It's also good to get out of the house – if you're not feeling up to it, keep the visits short and you don't have to talk about the way you're feeling.

## **Try some relaxation strategies**

Relaxation and mindfulness practices are a way to deal with stress and can help ease heavy emotions. You can download free calming apps, like the Virtual box app. Other things such as listening to music, spending time with pets, and doing activities you enjoy can also help you relax.

For some people, these tips will be enough to manage with their symptoms of depression. But if the depression is severe or has been going on for too long without improvement, it's important to get professional help.

## **Depression and the link between suicide and self-harm**

Some young people who experience depression may self-harm or experience thoughts of suicide.

If you have thoughts of suicide or self-harm, it's really important to talk to someone you trust, such as family member, friend or teacher, and to seek professional help.

You can also develop a safety plan yourself to help cope with feelings of distress and suicidal thought by using the personal safety plan at this link:

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/assets/OurWork/Downloads/Personal-safety-plan.pdf>

If you think you might act on any thoughts or plans to harm yourself, seek professional help (GP, counsellor, mental health worker) and involve family or support people to help you deal with this.

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger of serious self-harm, call 111.

## Where to get help

You GP or family doctor can help recommend an approach for you and might also suggest antidepressant medications. Psychological talking therapy may also be recommended for treating depression.

If you're at school or uni, you may also be able to access a counselling or student wellbeing service.

You can also text or freephone 1737, New Zealand's free support service with qualified and confidential counsellors. Let them know what's going on for you or the person you are concerned about, and they can support you.



## Other free helplines

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| <b>Youthline</b>    | 0800 376 633, free text 234, webchat at <a href="http://www.youthline.co.nz">www.youthline.co.nz</a> .                                     |
| <b>What's UP</b>    | 0800 942 8787 - Advice & counselling support for 5-18-year olds; 12pm to 11pm.   |
| <b>Kidsline</b>     | 0800 54 37 54 (0800 KIDSLINE) - Advice & counselling support up to 14 years; 4pm to 9pm weekdays.  |
| <b>Youth Law</b>    | 0800 884529 (0800 UTHLAW) - Free legal help for children and young people.   |
| <b>OUTLine NZ</b>   | 0800 688 5463 - Support for sexuality or gender identity issues.   |
| <b>Safe to talk</b> | text 4334 or online chat to someone <a href="http://www.safetotalk.nz">www.safetotalk.nz</a> - Confidential advice for sexual harm issues. |
| <b>Samaritans</b>   | 0800 726 666 - Counselling advice and support.   |
| <b>Healthline</b>   | 0800 611 116 - General health advice and information from a registered nurse.  |
| <b>Lifeline</b>     | 0800 543 354 or text 'Help' to 4357 - Counselling advice and support.  |



## Free online tools & info

 <p>Education &amp; support to look after your mental health, with free web-chat 24/7.</p>	 <p>For when life sux, Aunty Dee can help you solve your problems.</p>	 <p>E-therapy for young people who are feeling down, worried or stressed.</p>
 <p>Online community &amp; support for young people.</p>	 <p>Culturally based tools to support Pacific young people to unleash their full potential.</p>	 <p>Support and advice for managing online safety.</p>
 <p>For whanau and friends to understand what young people go through.</p>	 <p>Support for young people experiencing depression or anxiety.</p>	 <p>A virtual distraction &amp; self soothe kit.</p>
 <p>A step-by-step approach for working through anxiety &amp; depression.</p>	 <p>Learn mindfulness to develop better wellbeing.</p>	 <p>Info &amp; resources for queer &amp; gender diverse youth.</p>

This factsheet was put together in collaboration with Headspace Australia (National Youth Mental Health Foundation Ltd).

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