



# DEPRESSION & LOW MOOD



**A SELF-HELP GUIDE TO  
DEPRESSION AND LOW MOOD  
AND HOW TO COPE**



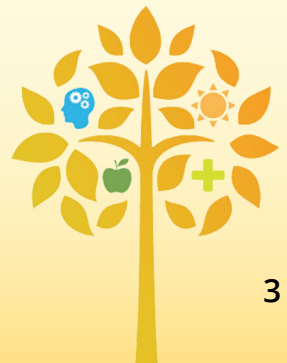
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# What is depression?

Everyone feels low in mood from time to time.

However, depression occurs when your low mood comes back again and again, or is long term and is negatively impacting your life. If someone has depression in its mildest form it will lower mood and make normal life more difficult. In its most severe form, depression can be life threatening and stops someone enjoying their life.



# Causes of Depression

No single cause of depression has been found. Usually there is more than one reason and these differ from person to person.

Life can be difficult and many different factors can contribute to someone becoming depressed.

Some people are more vulnerable to depression and sometimes there appears to be no obvious cause. However, there is evidence to link the following factors to depression:

- **Childhood experiences:** child abuse, neglect, unstable family, bereavement.
- **Traumatic and stressful events:** end of relationship, bereavement, assault, bullying or losing a job.
- **Mental and physical health problems:** PTSD, anxiety, chronic health problems, life threatening illness, change to lifestyle.
- **Genetic inheritance:** no specific genes have been identified but if a close family member has depression research shows you may be more vulnerable.
- **Medication, drugs and alcohol:** some medication can have side effects, always seek advice from your doctor. Alcohol and drugs can seem like a good short term solution but will quite often have adverse long term effects.
- **Sleep, diet and exercise:** our mind and our body are connected, so while being unhealthy in these areas does not cause depression, it can make you more vulnerable.

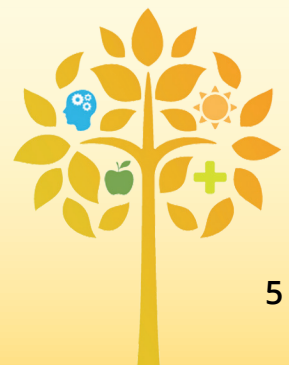
# Signs and Symptoms of Depression

Depression and low mood can impact many different parts of our daily lives. Such as our physical being, how we think, how we feel and how we behave.

The following are some of the common symptoms associated with depression:

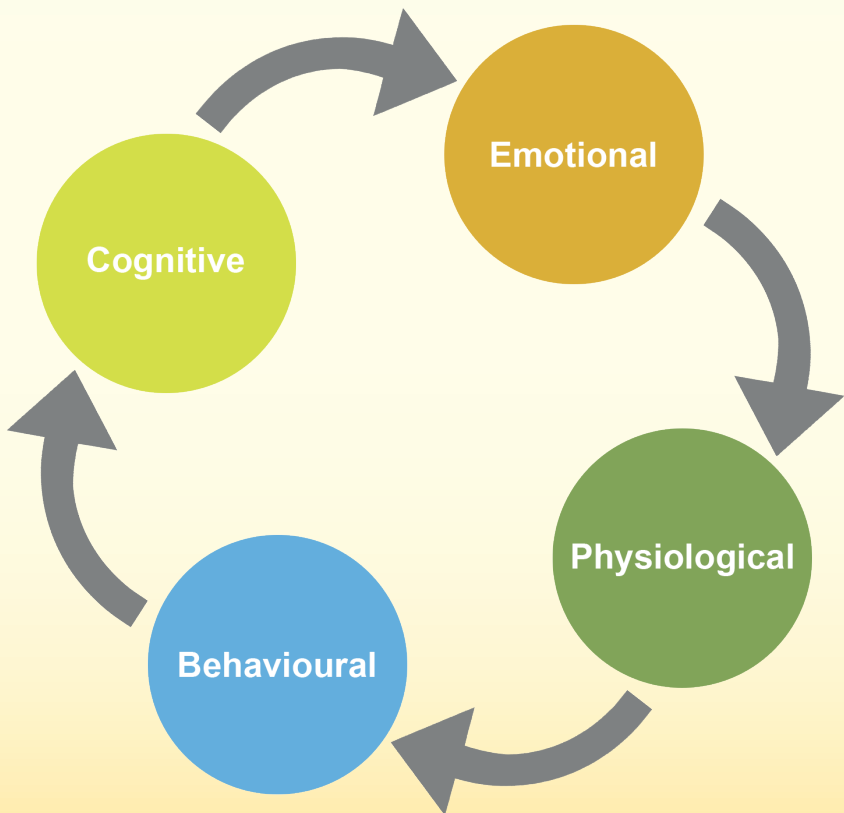
## Physiological

- Tiredness
- Lack of energy
- Restlessness
- Sleeping difficulties
- Sleeping too much
- Changes in weight, appetite and eating habits
- Loss of interest in sex
- Physical aches and pains with no obvious cause
- Moving very slowly



## Emotional

- Feeling sad, guilty, worthless, empty, numb, upset and in despair
- Crying a lot or being unable to cry
- Feeling lonely, even when with others
- Agitated and irritable
- Unable to relate to others
- Lack of enjoyment or interest in life
- Low self-esteem or confidence
- Lack of motivation
- Feeling suicidal
- Sense of unreality

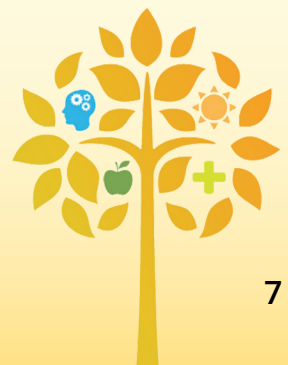


## Cognitive

- Difficulty concentrating
- Problems with memory
- Expecting the worst and negative thinking
- Thinking you hate yourself
- Lack of confidence in yourself
- Find it difficult to speak or think clearly

## Behavioural

- Avoiding any activity
- Not doing the things you used to enjoy
- Avoiding social interaction
- Using more tobacco, alcohol, drugs, gambling or binge watching TV
- Overeating or undereating
- Isolating yourself
- Self-harming behaviour e.g. cutting yourself, banging your head against the wall, pulling out your hair, risky sexual behaviour or swallowing dangerous objects.

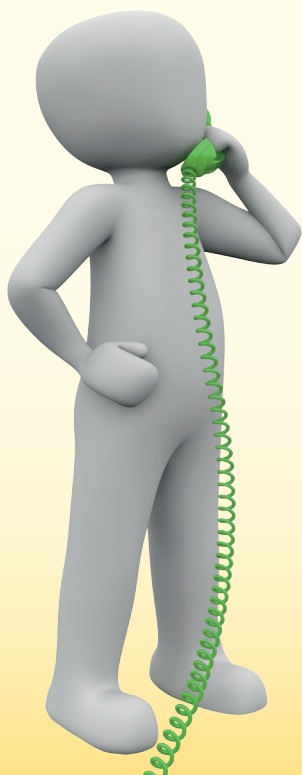


# Suicide and Self Harm

Self-harming behaviours may work as a short term coping strategy but they can be dangerous in the long term.

You can seek help to develop healthier coping strategies from mental health professionals.

If you are feeling low and hopeless you might start thinking about suicide. It can be frightening and difficult to control these thoughts and feelings. If you are worried about acting on thoughts of suicide call an ambulance, go straight to A&E, call the Wellbeing Hub or call the **Samaritans** for free on **116123** to talk.





# Self-Care for Depression & Low Mood

It is important to try and take care of yourself during difficult times. Here are some techniques that have helped other people to overcome their difficulties.

## Use your support network

It can be helpful to gain support from family, friends, work colleagues and team leader or line manager, organisations such as your GP, the Wellbeing Hub or other help services.

The most important things to remember are; that reaching out for help and support is a healthy way of coping when you are feeling low, you are not alone and there is no shame in seeking support.

## Other things that people have found helpful

- Trying new activities
- Helping other people through volunteering
- Attending groups
- Using talking helplines



## Look after your physical health

Body and mind are connected and when one is suffering it affects the other. Therefore, if you are feeling stressed it is important to take extra steps to look after your body as best as you can.

It can be difficult when you are feeling low but it is important to try:

- Having a healthy and balanced diet, making sure to eat regularly. This will help to boost energy levels.
- Try to be active and exercise, gentle exercise such as yoga or walking have been found to be helpful.
- Try and get enough sleep but not too much, this will help to balance your energy levels.
- Do not overuse alcohol, drugs, unhealthy food or TV / internet / gaming.
- Maintain hygiene: sometimes it can be difficult to get showered and dressed or clean the house. However, feeling clean and tidy can help to clear the mind.

## Self-compassion

One of the most important things to remember at all times and particularly when you are feeling low is to be kind to yourself.

Ways of being self-compassionate include:

- **Regularly doing things that make you happy:** remembering what makes you happy and doing these things can help to improve mood and motivation.
- **Treat yourself:** make sure you do nice things for yourself such as taking a bubble bath or spending time with a loved pet. Treating yourself can increase feelings of self- worth.
- **Developing resilience strategies:** these are covered later in the guide and you can find many on the internet.
- **Be kind to yourself:** when low in mood we tend to be more self-critical. When we constantly think about ourselves in a negative way it's more difficult to feel better. Remember to talk to yourself positively and think about yourself in a loving way. Always ask yourself, what would my best friend say to me?
- **Be mindful:** depression can be linked to thinking about either the past or the future. Try to think about the here and now and really pay attention to the details in this moment.



# Treatment for Depression

There are different treatments for depression and not all treatments suit everyone. Speak to your GP about options.

Here are some of the treatments available:

- **Talking therapies:** you would usually see a counsellor or a CBT therapist to try to understand your experience and overcome the difficulties you face.
- **Medication:** your doctor would describe the most suitable medication to suit you and your individual requirements.
- **Self-help:** making sure you are engaging in methods to help you overcome your difficulties is one of the most important aspects of your recovery. You are the only person that has control over your thoughts and actions, so along with support, working hard for yourself is the best form of treatment!



# Self-Help Strategies

There are many different strategies, methods and activities to help develop healthy coping strategies and resilience.

Here are just three examples:

## 1. Make a daily planner

- Sometimes just the thought of getting out of bed can be overwhelming. It can be helpful to make a plan for the day, then you can focus on one task at a time and start to feel satisfied as you get things done.
- When you make a daily plan try to start with the easier tasks, make sure there is a mixture of activities both chores and pleasure and remember to take small steps to get tasks done.
- As you start to complete the tasks you will feel a sense of achievement which will lift mood and energy levels.



## 2. Keep a reflection diary

Sometimes when we are low in mood it's difficult to focus on or even remember the positive. You could try to keep a diary to explore these things.

Some things to reflect on in the diary could be:

- The things you have achieved (do not be modest here!). Sometimes just getting up and having a shower is a big achievement and this should be recognised. Avoid comparing your achievements to other people or even yourself in times you were feeling better. We are all on our own unique journey.
- Write down all of the things you enjoy. When we are low in mood we can forget that life can be fun sometimes and that we once enjoyed lots of things and that we will again. When you have thought about all the things you enjoy remember to try and do some of them, even if you really don't feel like it. Sometimes we just need practice. It might feel pointless now, but maybe next time it will make it easier or maybe you will remember some positive feelings.
- Write down the things you are grateful for. It may seem difficult to feel positive or grateful when you are depressed, but sometimes when you consider all of the things in your life that you are grateful for or that you appreciate it can lift your mood and improve feelings of emptiness.

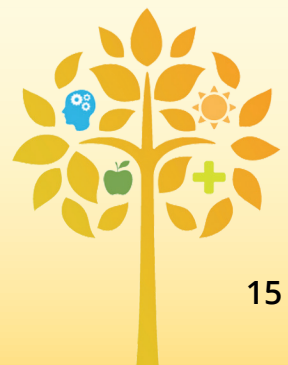
### 3. Challenge negative thinking

When we are low in mood we tend to fall into negative thinking patterns. It can be helpful to try and challenge this sometimes. When you are thinking about a situation write down or think about all of the negative thoughts you are having and come up with an alternative way of thinking about them that is more positive.

It can be helpful to think about what someone else might say about the negative thought if you are struggling yourself.

For example:

- **Negative thought:** “I am always too shy”, “People don’t like me”, “I will never have any friends”.
- **Alternative thought:** “Yesterday I had a good conversation with my friend”, “She thanked me for listening to her”, “I am good at listening”, “My friend appreciated my friendship”, “I am a good friend”.



## How to contact us

This can be for a referral, support or advice; for yourself, a colleague or your team member

### Telephone

You can call the Hub team on **0300 123 9193**  
Monday to Friday 09:00 - 17:00 hours.

### Email

you can email us at **wellbeinghub@secamb.nhs.uk**

### Intranet

You can access further information about Wellbeing on our Intranet pages.

<https://secamb.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet/staff/support/healthandwellbeing/Pages/default.aspx>

## Wellbeing Hub

Tel: 0300 123 9193  
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Crawley, RH10 9BG

