

# Depression: isn't it just a tough time?



## Depression needs to be taken seriously

Depression isn't just going through a tough time. It isn't the same as everyday sadness or anger. Everyone can feel sad or angry at certain times—like when you lose someone you care about or you're not doing well at work or school. That sort of everyday sadness is not depression.

Depression is more than just feeling upset or down. It's a serious medical illness which leaves you feeling sad or miserable most of the time and finding it hard to cope from day to day.

## So, how do I know if I (or someone I know) has depression?

According to the American Psychiatric Association, a young person is probably experiencing depression if he or she:

- appears unhappy, down or miserable, or cries regularly
- complains of feeling sad or empty OR
- has lost interest or enjoyment in things he/she used to enjoy.

Everyone feels unhappy from time to time, but the thoughts, feelings, behaviours and physical symptoms of depression last for **more than two weeks**.

Young people experiencing depression might also be:

- not doing so well at work or school, university or work AND/OR
- experiencing changes in their relationships with family and friends.

At the same time, they will have **four or more** if the following symptoms.

1. Their appetite or weight has changed considerably (have lost or gained lots of weight).
2. They are restless, agitated or slowed down.
3. They have lost a lot of energy, complain of feeling tired all the time.
4. They find it difficult to concentrate, have difficulties thinking things through or can't make up their mind.
5. They feel worthless or guilty about things that aren't their fault.
6. They believe that life is not worth living, that there is no future or they'd be better off dead.

What we're talking about here is the most common type of depression, known by doctors as **major depression**. Major depression is experienced by 3% of young people.

Apart from **major depression**, there are two other main types of depression.

**Dysthymia** Someone with dysthymia will have feelings of sadness or a depressed mood for most days of the week **for a year or more**, as well as some of the symptoms of major depression (though usually these are not as severe). Dysthymia often has an early onset (in childhood, teen years, early adult life) and can lead to major depression.

**Bipolar disorder (previously called manic depression)** Someone with bipolar experiences distinct times of depression (lows) and mania (extreme highs). Young people are more likely to first experience the lows of bipolar disorder. Less than 1% of young people experience bipolar disorder, which usually has its onset in adolescence. It is not often recognised or treated until the young person reaches adulthood.

You may find that you totally stop enjoying life, playing sports, achieving at work, hanging out with your friends or spending time with your family.

It's important for us all to learn to recognize the symptoms of depression so we can get help for ourselves or for others when it's needed. Getting the right type of help and getting it early can assist you with getting back on track and teach you new ways of dealing with depression.

*"[Depression's] more than feeling sad. It's a lack of motivation to do stuff. A feeling of worthlessness, low self-esteem. You don't feel like eating or talking. All you want to do is cry. I've cried so much my eyes can't cry anymore".*

**Lisa**

*"I crashed to an all-time low. For five months I barely slept. I was constantly sick and exhausted. I snapped and snarled at my housemate and spoke to no one else much at all. I worked as little as I could, and cried every day. But worst of all, I lived with a constant pain, like some sort of black cancer eating away at my very being".*

**Tanya**



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## Depression causes changes...

As we've said back on the previous page, changes in thoughts, behaviours and physical health can all be symptoms of depression. Some examples of these types of changes are shown in the boxes below.

### Behaviours

Stopped going out  
 Not getting school or uni work done  
 Avoiding close family and friends  
 Overdoing the alcohol and taking drugs  
 Stopped doing things they usually enjoy  
 Finding it hard to concentrate  
 Staying in bed during the day  
 Getting upset over little things  
 Attempts at self-harm (in extreme cases)

### Thoughts

"I'm a failure"  
 "It's all my fault"  
 "Nothing good ever happens to me"  
 "I'm worthless"  
 "Life's not worth living"  
 "I'm a bad person"  
 "Things are hopeless"  
 "There's no point in trying"

### Feelings

Overwhelmed  
 Guilty  
 Indecisive  
 Irritable  
 Disappointed  
 Frustrated  
 Miserable  
 No confidence  
 Sad

### Physical

Tired all the time  
 Run down  
 Headaches and sore muscles  
 Churning or upset stomach  
 Difficulty sleeping  
 Sleeping too much  
 Poor appetite and/or weight loss  
 Eating too much and/or weight gain  
 No energy

## Need help now?

If you, or someone you know, is in need of urgent help Ybblue recommends you consult your doctor, the emergency department of your local hospital or a mental health professional (like a psychologist or psychiatrist). Whether it's you or someone else that needs help, you can also phone Lifeline or Kids Help Line to speak to trained counsellors.

### Lifeline 13 11 14

Lifeline is a 24-hour telephone counselling service, where you can talk about a wide range of problems. To find out the mental health services available in your area, you can call Lifeline's **Just Ask** information line on 1300 131 114 or check out their database at [www.justlook.org.au](http://www.justlook.org.au).

### Kids Help Line 1800 55 1800 (freecall)

Kids Help Line is a 24-hour counselling service for people aged between 5 and 18. There is also online counselling available at their website: [www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au).

Ybblue is a youth program of *beyondblue: the national depression initiative*. For more information about depression, anxiety and related disorders, see [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

## Sources

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