

DEPRESSION



Introduction	<p>Depression is more than just feeling sad or down – it’s a serious condition that affects children and young people’s mood, behaviour and thoughts about themselves and the future.</p> <p>Depression affects many youngsters and can have a serious impact on personal development and wellbeing. It is important that students are able to recognise some of the signs and symptoms of depression, both in themselves and friends, and feel comfortable seeking further support when required.</p>
Objective / teachers’ goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying what depression is, and recognise its signs and symptoms • Understanding how to support a friend to get help for depression • Recognising valuable help-seeking strategies.
Relation to competence framework INTRODUCTION TO THE VITALITY COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK copy (vitalityforthefuture.eu)	<p>Willingness and empathy to work with different clients/patients</p> <p>Competence in analysing health needs</p> <p>Understanding mental health</p> <p>Communication</p>
<p>Dimensions (check the dimensions and related aspects below)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bodily functions <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mental wellbeing <input type="checkbox"/> Meaningfulness <input type="checkbox"/> Quality of life <input type="checkbox"/> Participation <input type="checkbox"/> Daily functioning</p>	
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A large room, or a room with a long wall • Opinion signs: agree, disagree, strongly disagree, strongly agree, neutral • Masking tape or Blu tack to stick up signs • Worksheets provided
Approach	<p><u>ACTIVITY 01</u> (15 min)</p> <p>Class activity: Agree-Disagree statements</p> <p>To feel more confident when teaching this lesson, we recommend you access the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the factsheet ‘Depression’ • the article ‘Depression Signs’ <p>Agree–Disagree: Depression statements</p>





During this activity, students' opinions related to depression will be explored. Remind students of the importance of listening to and valuing the opinions of others.

1. Hang the five opinion signs in order (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree) on a wall with space between each sign.
2. Read aloud to the students the following statements on depression, one by one:
 - Depression is more than feeling sad.
 - Sometimes, talking about depression isn't enough.
 - Depression can affect anyone, at any time.
 - Getting help can be really hard.
 - There are many options for treating depression.
 - People don't choose to have depression.

After reading each statement, ask students to move to the opinion sign that most closely aligns with their thinking. The number of statements you read out may depend on the time available and the engagement of the students.

Invite students to share with the group or a partner why they moved to a particular opinion sign.

- 3 At the end of the activity, share with students the article '8 facts about depression'.

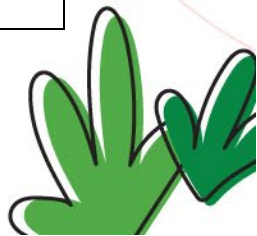
ACTIVITY 02 (15 min)

Case study article: Tara's experience

1. Students read the article 'Tara's experience opening up to a friend to overcome depression'.
2. Ask students to answer the following questions individually:
 - What were the signs and symptoms of Tara's depression?
 - What were the risk factors for Tara's depression?
 - What help-seeking strategies did Tara find useful?
 - Suggest other help-seeking strategies that may have been useful for Tara.
- 3 As a class, brainstorm on the board the symptoms of depression. Colour code these into thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

ACTIVITY 03 (30 min)

Conversation practice: Helping a friend





	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Write a comic: supporting someone you are worried about<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Using images and conversation bubbles, write a conversation where one person is struggling with the signs and symptoms of depression.2. Summary:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Discuss with students the support services available at school and who they can go to if they are concerned about someone – e.g. school psychologist, or head of student wellbeing.
Type of activity (workshop, assignment, quiz, debate, presentation, etc.)	Workshop + Self-reflection/assessment + Debate
Duration	1 hour
Final goal (learning outcome)	Students understand what depression is, how to recognise it and ways to seek help.





Dimension/Aspects							
Bodily functions	Feeling healthy	Fitness	Complaints and pain	Sleep	Food	Condition	Exercise
Mental well-being	Remember	Concentrate	Communicating	Being cheerful	Accepting yourself	Dealing with change	Sense of control
Quality of life	Enjoy	Being happy	Balance	Feeling safe	How you live	Get by with your money	Feeling comfortable with yourself
Social participation	Social contact	Be taken seriously	Doing fun things together	Belonging	Doing meaningful things together	Support from others	Interest in society
Daily functioning	Taking care of yourself	Knowing your limits	Knowledge of health	Dealing with time	Dealing with money	Being able to work	Being able to ask for help
Meaningfulness	Meaningful life	Zest of life	Wanting to achieve deals	Have confidence	Accept	Gratitude	Keep learning





8 Facts about depression

Mental health problems are challenging and complicated, and it's important to get support when faced with them. Here are some interesting facts about depression, along with some myths about this condition you should be aware of.

This can help if:

- you want to know more about depression
- you're living with depression
- you feel like no one understands what you're going through, and it's hard to talk to the people you care about.



Fact 1: Depression is common, but treatment can help

If you are experiencing depression, you aren't alone:

- In their lifetimes, about one in five Australians will experience depression.
- Around the world, depression affects around 300 million people.
- Depression is the most commonly experienced mental health challenge for young people aged between 12-25 years old.

Talking about how you feel with a trusted friend or family member is an important step. In addition, mental health professionals can offer treatments and strategies that are an important part of the recovery journey.

Fact 2: Depression isn't the same as being 'lazy' or 'weak'

Experiencing depression can mean that people struggle to get out of bed, get to school or work, or take part in activities that they used to enjoy.

From the outside, this can look like they're not trying hard enough. The way that others respond to a person with depression is important, and the misconception that they are lazy or weak can make it more difficult for them to seek help and recover.

Depression can affect all kinds of people, even those who are traditionally considered to be 'strong' or who seem like they have no obvious reason to be depressed.





Fact 3: Depression has many causes, and can affect anyone

Psychologists have found many different factors that can cause depression:

- Recent events in people's lives: breakups, loss, unemployment, life transitions, conflict with family and friends.
- Longstanding life issues: trauma, loneliness, addiction.
- Physical causes: genetic factors, medications, differences in your brain chemistry, nutrition, hormones, immune system and gut health.

It's helpful to know about all the causes of depression because there could be lots of different things impacting your condition, and some of those could be things you aren't even aware of.

People of all races, sexes and classes can be affected by depression, and all can struggle in dealing with the stigma surrounding it.

Fact 4: Depression often exists alongside anxiety

Depression and anxiety are distinct experiences with separate causes and solutions, but it's common for people to experience both at once, or for one to cause another.

- Anxiety is experienced regularly by almost 50% of people who have depression.
- The problems experienced by people with anxiety, like finding it hard to connect to others or engage in life without worrying, can lead to depression.
- It can be an enormous challenge living with anxiety. However, it is also relatively common, so people who experience it might not realise it's something that affects their everyday life.

Fact 5: There are different types of depression

For psychologists, 'depression' is actually a 'blanket term' referring to a few different experiences that people face. Here are some common types:

- Major Depressive Disorder: this is the most common type of depression people face. It refers to when depressive symptoms last for more than two weeks.
- Chronic Depression or Persistent Depressive Disorder: This form of depression lasts longer and is diagnosed when someone's been experiencing symptoms most days for at least two years.

Bipolar Disorder: People who experience this condition experience moods that can shift significantly. They can experience periods of depression for weeks, followed by periods of mania (an extremely elevated mood).

- Seasonal Depression: this form of depression is where feelings of sadness and tiredness can occur in yearly cycles depending on the weather patterns around them. Usually it will affect people during winter months, and lift during spring and summer. It's more common in cold climates which experience less daylight during winter months.

Fact 6: No one chooses to have depression

People don't choose to be depressed, in the same way that people don't choose to have cancer. So, telling a person with depression to cheer up or to 'snap out of it' can be harmful and can leave them feeling more isolated. Depression is associated with complex social, biological and cultural factors that can't be wished away

Fact 7: Getting help can be really hard





For many people, depression can bring feelings of shame or hopelessness, and a sense of being broken or unworthy. This can make it a huge struggle to ask for support, or to get help to make things better. Understanding that these feelings are a part of depression and can shift with treatment can sometimes help to get enough motivation to take action.

Fact 8: There are many options for treating depression

Depending on the severity and cause of the depression, different treatment methods are available, which are evidence-based and provided by mental health professionals. However, recovery takes time and may involve lots of ups and downs.

Many people who have recovered from depression describe a number of changes that have helped them, from physical exercise (such as walking), to making art or playing music, to using psychological therapies. In some cases, a doctor might prescribe medication to help manage severe symptoms.

It's important that you feel comfortable with the mental health professional you choose to work with. Some people need to meet a few people before they find the one who is the right fit for them.

While getting support can be daunting, it can really help you to manage depression. The sooner this happens, the sooner you can start feeling more like yourself again.

What is depression

Depression is more than just feeling sad or down – it's a serious condition that affects children and young people's mood, behaviour and thoughts about themselves and the future.

What's depression?

From time to time, everyone feels depressed, but it usually doesn't last. If left untreated it can have serious negative impacts on a child or young person's wellbeing.

A diagnosis of depression is made only when the:

- depressed mood has lasted more than two weeks
- behaviour is seen in more than one situation (for example, at home and at school)
- symptoms are severe enough to limit the child or young person's ability to cope with everyday situations or cause problems at home, at school and with friends.



Learn more about the different types of depression.

There's no single cause of depression

Many factors come into play, such as:

- life events (for example, a death in the family or family separation)
- biological factors (for example, genetics)
- learning community-based factors (for example, peer group difficulties, especially bullying).

psychological factors (for example, a tendency to think negatively).





How does depression affect children and young people?

Depression can make it hard for children and young people to learn. Without professional support, this can have long-term impacts on their school achievement.

Sometimes older children or young people experiencing depression may talk about wanting to die or harm themselves. This can be alarming, but it's important that you take this seriously. Whether such talk represents a clear intention of suicide or is a way of expressing feelings of depression, it indicates a high level of distress that requires attention. Read more about suicide prevention.

Depression can significantly impact the lives of children and young people. But getting the right type of help – and getting it early – can make a huge difference in their mental health.

What signs should I look out for?

Depression is common but can often be missed in children and young people.

When adults are depressed, feelings of sadness can be very obvious. But in children and young people, symptoms of depression can look more like irritability, sleep changes, loss of appetite or weight loss. Since the symptoms of depression in childhood are often negative behaviors (for example, irritability or whingeing), it's easy for adults to feel annoyed and to blame or punish the child for their behavior.

In adolescence, depression can be labelled as merely a 'teenage problem' – which can lead to other signs of depression being missed. Unlike adults, children and young people are often unable to explain how they're feeling, especially when depressed.

A child or young person who is depressed may:

- be irritable, easily annoyed or upset
- seem sad and cry easily
- be difficult to engage and motivate
- have difficulty concentrating in class and completing their work
- seem withdrawn and have difficulty relating to peers and educators
- have low energy
- lose interest easily in an activity they usually enjoy
- have difficulty making decisions
- make a lot of negative comments about themselves
- look for what's wrong rather than see the positives in situations
- be very difficult to please
- have trouble sleeping or want to sleep most of the day
- experience changes in weight (including both weight loss and gain)
- Withdraw from peer group activities or social situations.





Signs

DEPRESSION affects many youngsters and can have a serious impact on personal development and wellbeing. It is important that students are able to recognise some of the signs and symptoms of depression, both in themselves and friends, and feel comfortable seeking further support when required.

Signs this might be a problem:

- unexplained feelings of sadness, hopeless and/or helplessness
- altered sleeping patterns, either oversleeping or having difficulty getting to or staying asleep
- loss of interest in activities previously found enjoyable, such as spending time with friends or playing sports
- feeling anxious a lot of the time
- having no energy or motivation
- crying more than usual, or for no apparent reason.



What is depression?

Feelings of sadness, guilt, irritability or even worthlessness are something most people experience at some point. However, when these feelings are present for most of the day, every day for at least two weeks and interfere in daily functioning (such as work, school or sport commitments), then this is considered clinical depression. Depression often results in impaired sleeping patterns and appetite, diminished interest in daily activities and general fatigue. Although sometimes triggered by life events, such as bullying or the breakup of a relationship, depression can often occur without any obvious reason or trigger. Severe depression may result in suicidal thoughts.

Non-melancholic depression, also known as major or clinical depression, is the most common form of depressions. Clinical depression often occurs in response to psychological factors, such as experiencing a series of stressful events, but may not resolve once these issues have been resolved. As non-melancholic depression does not have any defining symptoms (such as psychotic features or impaired mental functioning) it may be difficult to diagnose. Other forms of depression include melancholic depression, which is typically more severe than a non-melancholic depression, and psychotic depression.

Melancholic depression is thought to be more strongly influenced by biological factors than non-melancholic depression, affecting around 1-2% of the general population. Psychotic depression, which presents with psychotic features, is relatively uncommon. Depression can often co-occur with other anxiety and substance abuse disorders.

Signs and symptoms of depression

Depression has a range of symptoms, and people may not experience all of these symptoms. However, some common ones are:

- feeling sad or depressed most of the time
- sleep disturbances
- irritability
- general lack of interest and enjoyment in activities previously engaging
- crying often
- feeling anxious





- unintentional changes in weight, either weight gain or loss, and changes in appetite
- feeling restless or unable to concentrate
- fatigue
- feeling worthless or guilty
- lack of self-esteem
- loss of libido
- suicidal or self-harming thoughts.

Helping students with depression

Learning how to manage stressful situations and recognizing when to seek help, either personally or for friend or relative, are important tools enabling students to manage and possibly prevent depression. Stress management and coping techniques such as meditation and increased physical activity can be valuable ways to minimise the risk of developing depression. These techniques are a starting point for helping reduce the impact of depression in high school students. If a student is experiencing many or even a few of the symptoms associated with depression, it may be important to seek medical advice. Visiting a local GP is often advisable, who can then work out the best course of treatment. This may involve counselling or therapy, such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), or in some circumstances medications such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), tricyclics (TCAs) or irreversible Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors (MAOIs) or others may be recommended.

Tara

Tara's experience opening up to a friend to overcome depression



Tara's depression took the form of anger towards herself and the world. Read about how voicing her feelings helped her to recover from depression.

Have you ever felt like you're standing on a busy street and screaming, but no one even notices you? This is how I felt in the middle of year 11, when I came to the sudden realisation that life was far from easy.

I was in a deep hole

Over a period of about two months I fell into a deep hole of depression, when several issues came to a head in my life. It all began when schoolwork started to get difficult. After years of easy grades, I suddenly had to work hard for them, and the requirements became more complex and intense. After a while I gave up trying, as I'd convinced myself that I just couldn't do it. I felt lost and confused, with no idea of what I wanted for the future. I lost all motivation. I thought that by giving up and ignoring the difficult things, life would get easier.

Gradually, I became increasingly unhappy with myself and it began affecting other parts of my life, particularly relationships with my family and close friends. I became very removed and distant. My emotions became more intense and I fell deeper into a black hole of depression. Although I maintained the smile and the happy face, I was screaming on the inside for someone to notice how unhappy I was.





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My sadness turned into anger

My sadness turned to anger, and I became angry at the world, at myself and at everyone else. I began taking my anger out on my family, constantly fighting with Mum. I just didn't know what else to do. I spent a lot of time alone in my room listening to music and crying, trying to escape from the world.

I soon found an outlet for my emotions in writing and drawing. By spilling it all out on paper, I could begin to think more clearly and make sense of how I felt.

I opened up to my friend

The situation started to get better when I finally began to talk about it. Suddenly, it didn't seem so bad after all. I opened up to a friend and, after all the tears and emotion, I realised that people did care about me. It was like a huge weight had been lifted from my shoulders.

I learnt a lot about life as I gradually overcame my depression. It's not easy, but it's not meant to be easy. It's the challenging times and experiences that make us better and stronger people.

Although I still don't know exactly what I want to do in life, I've realised that if you do things that make you happy, you'll get somewhere that you want to be and you'll find happiness along the way.



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