

These are the thoughts of two people who are depressed:

"I feel so alone, I never see my friends now, I guess they have dropped me. They probably don't like me - who would? There is no point in making any effort it doesn't pay off ... I just hate myself".

"I feel like crying all the time, I am so tired and I can't get

interested in anything.






If you are depressed, you may have had similar thoughts yourself. Depression is a very common problem and many people feel low or down in the dumps at times. This is often because of ordinary stresses, but for some people the problem becomes much worse and normal life itself becomes difficult.



Right now you may feel that nothing can be done to help. But there are things that you can do yourself which will make a difference.



These are some of the signs or symptoms that you may experience if you are depressed. Tick any that are happening to you.

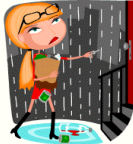
Emotions or feelings	
	Feeling sad, guilty, upset, numb or despairing. Losing interest and enjoyment in things Crying a lot or feeling unable to cry. Feeling alone even if you are with other people you are friendly with.
	Tiredness. Restlessness. Sleep problems, especially waking lots of times in the night or waking up really early. Feeling worse at a particular time of the day (usually the morning). Changes in your appetite.
Thoughts	
	Losing confidence in yourself.
	Expecting the worst and having gloomy thoughts. Thinking that everything seems hopeless. Black thoughts. Thinking you hate yourself. Can't remember things or concentrate.

How these feelings, bodily signs and thoughts may affect your life

You may find it difficult to do even simple things.



You stop doing your normal activities.
You cut yourself off from other people.



You may just do nothing for long periods of time.
You may feel that you have to double check everything.

Of course not everyone who is depressed has all of these symptoms.

And even if you are not very depressed, it is usual to feel some of these things from time to time.

Especially if you have recently suffered a loss and especially if someone close has died. When these symptoms are part of a normal reaction to sad events they should start to fade away with time. Most people find it helpful to talk over these feelings with somebody who cares.

But if these feelings are very strong or continue for some time, then you need to take steps to help yourself and/or seek help from others.



What causes depression?



There are lots of reasons. Maybe you have been stressed for a long time, or maybe you are very sensitive.

Are some people more likely to become depressed than others?

Some people seem to be. Some people may be more likely to look on the gloomy side of life.



How can I help myself to feel better?



There are lots of things you can do to help yourself.

1. Do something

- ⊗ *Exercise* is very helpful. Walk, run, cycle, skip, dance, swim, whatever you like. Plan 15 or 20 minutes of activity every day, or every other day to begin with. This kind of activity can actually begin to make you feel less tired.



- ⊗ Find something that *interests you* and spend some time on it.

- ⊗ Think about what you like and make sure you do something nice each day.





- ⊗ Some people find that painting, writing poetry or playing music that helps them to express their feelings, can help them to feel better.



Make a small start on tasks that you may have been avoiding. Break big tasks down into smaller stages and tackle them one by one.



This way, by not taking on too much you are more likely to achieve something and that will make you feel good. Use the chart on the next page.

Goal	Write down your goal and the date you started 
Step 1	
Step 2	
Step 3	
Step 4	
Step 5	
Step 6	
Done it!	Put the date here:..... 

2. Talk to others

Try and tell those close to you how you are feeling.



They may be able to listen and help you to think things through.



Having a cry can help.

You may be surprised to find that other people you talk to have felt depressed themselves at some time and can understand how you feel.

Use this space to write down the names of anyone you might be able to talk to.

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3. Look after yourself

Eat well; a good diet can help to keep you in good health so recovery is easier. Don't forget to drink enough water.
Try to think of things that will help you get a good night's sleep and



wake up feeling better.

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4. Challenge gloomy thoughts

Don't allow gloomy thoughts to go unchallenged. When someone is feeling depressed they often tend to think the worst.






Don't just accept these thoughts.

Try to :

- ⊗ Work out when your mood is very low;
- ⊗ jot down the unpleasant thoughts you are having during that time;
- ⊗ try and write down arguments against them. Imagine what you would say to a friend if they had such negative thoughts about themselves
- ⊗ try and keep a diary of things you have enjoyed or achieved during the week. This can help you to concentrate on the good things rather than the bad things in your life.






Use the chart on the next page to practice challenging your gloomy thoughts.

Date	When did I feel very low (what was happening?)	What I was thinking	Arguments against that thought
			

Keep a diary of things you have enjoyed this week

Date.....

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
 morning							
 afternoon							
 evening							

**Adapted by Sarah Kendal (2007), University of Manchester,
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