



# Psychotherapy and Counselling



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## **Depression.**

Depression is as disabling as a physical limitation. It results in physiological bodily changes which bring chemical changes within the brain and nervous systems that, in turn, increase the intensity of symptoms.

***You may be depressed if you experience some of the following:***

- Poor appetite
- Poor / disturbed sleep
- Awakening feeling OK, then as the day gradually unfolds your mood deteriorates and can be accompanied by feelings of dread, being overwhelmed and a sense of disconnection from other people – or alternatively, on awakening there may be a sense of dread and reticence then your mood gradually improves throughout the day.
- Difficulties concentrating and remembering.
- A preoccupation with past reflections and a deep concerns and anxiety towards the future. It becomes increasingly difficult to live and be present in the moment.
- Feelings of low self worth and a tendency to be overly critical and harsh in one's estimation.
- Emotional numbness – a lack of general vitality and loss of resilience and spontaneity.
- A pervading view as being a 'burden' to others, this may or may not accompany thoughts or intentions of suicide.
- Ruminations – finding one's mind constantly running through worrying scenarios, problem situations, recounting distressing interactions from the previous day or period/s further back.
- Difficulty getting in touch with – and staying with healthy expressions of anger, sadness and fear, which, if expressed in a healthy way can bring forth calm, clarity and a sense of freeing up and relief. Depression can be said to be an internalising of these important feelings - anaesthesia if you like – losing the pulse of one's own good instinctive solutions.
- Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and shame – generally feeling stuck in repetitive problem situations

with a real sense of struggle to gain perspective.

- Some individuals (with particular emotional blocking styles) can create exaggerated upbeat reactions as a defence in coping with persistent low mood. These patterns attempt to outwardly mask internal realities. Examples of this may include throwing oneself into overwhelming work burdens, sexual promiscuity or addiction, and repeated exposure to risky situations, adopting a fixed, glazed smile gaining esteem from either pleasing – or feeling in control, with other people. Such styles indicate what is sometimes called an ‘underlying depression’ and are compensating for this. There are many more ways we may find ourselves ‘papering over the cracks’ – “Everything’s fine!” whilst completely neglecting and struggling to function in other key areas of life. It is possible to be extremely successful in one area of life whilst in complete despair in another. The issue here is that behaviour becomes eventually corrosive to functioning in successful areas of life. It is like an otherwise well built house on compromised foundations. It serves us well in the short term only.
- Depression invariably accompanies, and is driven by, a set of personally specific problematic styles of thoughts and beliefs towards oneself and the world. It is very common for someone who is feeling depressed to take things very personally that may objectively have little or nothing to do with them.
- Depression involves a cycle where control is felt increasingly outside of oneself with external factors, rather than directed from within the grasp of one’s own personal qualities, resources and influence.
- Depression also robs a person from feeling any sense of real traction in life’s natural changes and transitions.
- There can be an avoidance of particularly difficult situations altogether and also a withdrawal from friends and loved ones, social events, hobbies or interests that the person used to derive pleasure and satisfaction from.
- Some people may find themselves becoming easily triggered by aspects of life where they used to cope well. They could feel very tearful without any helpful and healthy defences, feeling painfully exposed.
- More generally depression plays the role of ‘depressing’ one’s ability to access a full spectrum of shades of grey and colour - the subtle emotions and sensations in between are replaced by an increasing sense of being either simply OK or not. Emotional life balance is important in cognitive processing and depressed life becomes flattened and one can feel life is lacking meaning and purpose. Passion and enthusiasm seem unobtainable.
- Depression can make people feel physically unwell, with aches and pains and other unusual sensations as well as worsening previous established conditions. These symptoms should always be checked out by a General Practitioner before attributing them to depression alone.

There are dimensions of depression that can underlie a great number of other psychological disorders and difficulties. Psychotherapy is recognised as an extremely effective way of making and maintaining a full recovery from depression - whether it has been long lasting and chronic, or more moderate and perhaps sporadically occurring, triggered by specific situations and events.

If you are currently taking antidepressant medication prescribed by your G.P. this would not prevent you from benefitting considerably from personal talking therapy. Psychotherapy and counselling can also support a safe gradual withdrawal from medication when you (and your G.P) feel ready and, as you grow in self confidence it can allow you to find new ways to handle situations and emotions. In later stages of therapy, relapse prevention comes to the fore and some people find it useful to attend less often for a series of scheduled follow ups which give confirmation and reinforce that they are coping well.

There are often quite surprising (and creative) new solutions to old problems. Many people find working through and out of the considerable suffering and burden of depression presents unexpected opportunities to view and experience oneself and life differently and make different choices. There are often options that one previously could not have imagined, let alone believed possible, and sometimes it can be the most subtle changes in uniquely individual ways that bring the most powerful personal shift. No two peoples’ depression has the same issues and reasons at its roots. Everyone is different and so I offer psychotherapy to reflect your own unique innate strengths, abilities and instincts.

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