

IS IT OK TO FEEL SO DOWN AND WORRIED ALL OF THE TIME?

During our adolescent or teenage years we come to learn about life's ups and downs brought about through changes in our bodies, winning and losing at sports, achievements and disappointments in our academic performance, falling in and out of love for the first time or problems at home. But when should we become concerned that what is said to be a tough time just doesn't want to get better?

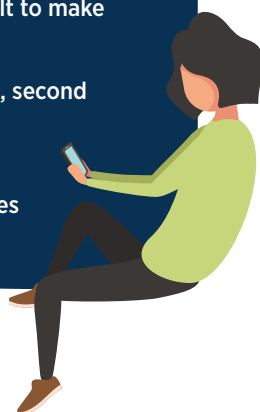


Feeling that you are not in control of your emotions, and particularly feeling down or depressed for prolonged periods of time can be very concerning and may affect your **physical, emotional and behavioural well-being**¹.



Emotional signs and symptoms of depression

- Feeling exhausted or dizzy all of the time – even after sleeping for many hours
- Your speech and movements could also be a lot slower than usual causing you to take very long to accomplish tasks that would normally require very little effort – such as dressing yourself or doing your homework
- You might feel restless, picking at your fingernails or feeling like you cannot sit still
- You could also feel worthless, having thoughts about hurting yourself or finding it very difficult to make decisions about every-day challenges
- Lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem, second guessing yourself
- Feeling extremely angry at your friends, family or teachers and experiencing urges to hurt/harm others



Physical signs and symptoms of depression



Changes in your appetite causing you to lose your appetite, or as a dramatic increase in appetite and cravings for food



Dramatic weight gain or weight loss



Feeling unusually tired, often wanting to sleep all the time, or experience extreme difficulty in falling or staying asleep



Some people also have stomach aches or a runny tummy when they feel stressed

Behavioural signs and symptoms of depression



Experiencing difficulty in remembering what you have learnt, concentrating in class or doing your homework could also indicate trouble in some people

Feeling fidgety as if you cannot sit still at all

Feeling like you don't want to see your friends and that you want to be alone all of the time

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If you are experiencing any of these thoughts you should know that you are not alone. It is estimated that 20 out of every 100 young people in South Africa could be suffering from *depression*².

As you are becoming more aware of the changes in your body and in your emotions it is natural to have “better” or “tougher” days. It is important to know that help is available when you feel overwhelmed or if you have experienced any of these feelings.

HOW CAN YOU TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF WHEN YOU ARE FEELING VERY “DOWN” AND DEPRESSED?

Be patient with yourself. You do not have to magically get rid of all the negative feelings all at once.

Reach out for help and speak to your loved ones about your feelings.

Remember that thinking negative thoughts are part of the depressive phase and as you work through your feelings, you will become more positive and experience happier thoughts.

Avoid making very big decisions that could place further pressure on you, such as changing a school or to become intimate with your boyfriend/girlfriend.

Surround yourself with friends and peers that positively affect and influence your life, avoid people who are negative thinkers.

Avoid medication that was not specifically prescribed to you. Stay away from alcohol and drugs as it may worsen your down feelings and prolong the time it takes to feel better again.

Keep your appointments if you are seeing a counsellor or healthcare worker and tell them if you have had any changes in your feelings.

Be proud of yourself for seeking help and recognise that you have taken the first step towards growing through these feelings.

Knowledge is power – learn as much as you can about depression and the types of treatment available so that you can make well-informed decisions.

Do not feel guilty or weak – depression can occur to anyone at any time, it is how you deal with it that is important.

Reference:
1. 2012. Abnormal psychology: A South African perspective. Cape Town: Oxford University Press. Edited by Burke 560Pp.
2. 2004. Mental Health Nursing – a South African perspective. Fourth edition. Cape Town: Juta publishers. 768Pp.

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To find out more, contact 011 219 9626 / 9620 or email mentalhealth.headoffice@lifehealthcare.co.za