

Self Help Tips for people with Depression

- Seek help early. The earlier the illness is diagnosed the sooner it can be treated.
- Learn about the illness - this will help you understand and come to terms with the illness. It may also help you get maximum benefit from treatment.
- Talk about your illness to people who understand such as family and friends. Aware self-help support groups provide the opportunity to meet with other people who have personal experience of the illness.
- Try to tackle the cause of your illness, for example, do you know what has brought it on? It can help to write down the problem and think of things you can do to bring about an improvement. Don't be afraid to seek help and don't be discouraged if you have setbacks.
- Avoid alcohol and non-prescribed drugs. Although they may alleviate some of the symptoms in the short term, in the longer term these substances may make your depression worse.
- Avoid excess caffeine. Too much tea, coffee and other caffeine rich drinks such as cola and energy drinks can increase anxiety symptoms or boost your energy for a short while, but after you may feel more depressed.
- Eat a good balanced diet. This is important for your physical and mental well-being. Try to avoid sugary foods which give an instant energy boost but may make you feel worse as their effect wears off.
- Take up a new hobby or start attending a night class. Again this can give you something to focus on and exercise your brain without being under any pressure.
- Re-examine your lifestyle and try to achieve a good balance between work, school/college, activities and personal time for relaxation and rest.
- Keep as active as possible. Recent research has indicated the huge benefits of exercise for those people with mild to moderate depression.

About Aware

We are the only charity in Northern Ireland working exclusively to help those affected by depression.

Information Literature

A wide range of literature on various topics relating to depression is available at support group meetings and public talks. We also have a number of useful factsheets available that are downloadable from our website or can be sent by post.

Our 'Understand More' booklets include:

Depression
Depression for Carers
Bipolar Disorder
Depression in Later Years
Postnatal Depression

Public Information Events

We raise awareness of depression and the services we provide at various information events across Northern Ireland and other appropriate settings.



Contact us for more information

Helpline 08451 20 29 61

www.aware-ni.org

info@aware-ni.org



Information about Depression and Our Services



The only charity in Northern Ireland
working exclusively for those with
depression

What is Depression?

We all feel sad or fed-up at times. These feelings are usually short-lived and are a normal response to difficult experiences or circumstances in our lives. Depression occurs when these feelings go on for a longer period of time and are more than we are able to cope with. Depression is a very common illness that can affect anyone at any stage in their life.

What Causes Depression?

Depression can be caused by things that happen in our lives such as bereavement, unemployment, physical illness, relationship problems and other disappointments. Sometimes, there is no obvious cause. The illness can occur for no apparent reason. Some people may be more prone to depression than others. Factors that may make you more vulnerable include a family history of depression, difficult childhood experiences and personality traits such as being a perfectionist or being unassertive. Alcohol and/or drug abuse can also increase the risk of becoming depressed.

Treatments for Depression

Most people with depression are treated by their family doctor although some are referred for more specialist help to local mental health services. Treatment will depend on the symptoms, the severity of the depression and the circumstances. For mild to moderate depression, lifestyle changes may initially be suggested for example; exercise, a better work/life balance or reducing alcohol consumption. A form of talking therapy such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy or a self-help programme based on CBT such as our 'Living Life to the Full' programme may be suggested. Anti-depressant medication may also be prescribed alone or in conjunction with some or all of the above.

Signs and Symptoms of Depression

It is important to understand the symptoms of depression. These include:

- An unusually sad mood that doesn't go away
- Loss of enjoyment and interest in activities that used to be enjoyable
- Tiredness and lack of energy

In addition, people who are depressed can have a range of other symptoms such as:

- Loss of confidence in themselves or poor self-esteem
- Feeling guilty when they are not really at fault
- Wishing they were dead
- Difficulty making decisions and concentrating
- Moving more slowly or becoming agitated and unable to settle
- Having difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much
- Loss of interest in food or eating more than usual

It is important to visit your GP if you experience several of these symptoms for more than two weeks

How Can Aware Help?

Aware is a voluntary organisation that provides practical support and information to all those in Northern Ireland affected by depression. Our services include:

Self-help Support Groups

The support group brings people together experiencing similar problems, so that they can support each other and learn more about the illness and the treatments available. Attending a group enables people to share experiences, discuss self-help strategies and coping skills that will help in the recovery process of depression.

Telephone Helpline

Our telephone helpline provides a listening ear and information service for those affected by depression including relatives and friends. This service is currently available Monday - Friday: 9.00am to 1.00pm.

Education Programmes

Living Life to the Full

This is a unique education programme based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy concepts and provides an opportunity for people with mild to moderate depression/anxiety to understand more about their illness and learn practical ways to maintain/improve mental wellbeing.

Mood Matters

Mood Matters is an educational programme developed and delivered by Aware. The aim is to raise awareness of the importance of looking after our mental health, recognise signs of stress, anxiety and depression and learn practical ways to maintain/improve mental wellbeing. Mood Matters can be delivered to a variety of different age groups. These include young people in post-primary education or other youth settings; adults from the community and voluntary groups; adults in other community settings; and referrals by GP's and Community Mental Health teams.

Mental Health First Aid Training (MHFA)

Mental Health First Aid is the help given to a person experiencing a mental health problem, before the appropriate and professional help is received. MHFA teaches participants how to recognise the symptoms of mental health problems, how to provide initial help and how to encourage a person towards the relevant professional or other help.

For more information visit our website
www.aware-ni.org