

## Signs and Symptoms of Depression

It is important to understand the symptoms of depression which 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, leading to weight loss or weight gain.

**It is important to visit your GP if you are experiencing several of these symptoms for more than two weeks.**

Not every person who has depression will have all of these symptoms. Depending on the number and severity, a depressive episode may be specified as mild, moderate or severe.



## About Aware

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

## Feedback

We aim to provide a service of the highest quality and welcome your comments and suggestions. If there is anything you would like to say about your local group or the work of Aware in general, please talk to your group facilitator. Alternatively, you may contact either of our offices or email [info@aware-ni.org](mailto:info@aware-ni.org). We also operate a formal complaints policy, the details of which are available on request.

## Website

Our website has a wide range of information on all the services we offer, an interactive map of all our Support Groups, lists of all the programmes we offer including the facility to apply online for Living Life To The Full and Mental Health First Aid. Log on now to [www.aware-ni.org](http://www.aware-ni.org)



## Contact us for more information

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Tel 028 9035 7820

**Helpline 08451 20 29 61**

**[www.aware-ni.org](http://www.aware-ni.org)**

**[info@aware-ni.org](mailto:info@aware-ni.org)**



## Information about our Support Groups



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

## Welcome

We hope you will benefit from attending our support group meetings.

## Who are the groups for?

Support Groups are for people affected by depression, including bipolar disorder (manic depression.) This includes relatives and carers who want to know more about depression and how they can help someone.

## What is the purpose of the Group?

The purpose of the group is to bring 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 also enables people to share experiences, discuss self-help strategies and coping skills that will help in the recovery process.

## How many meetings should I attend?

Attendance at a number of consecutive meetings is advised to achieve maximum benefit to help people with their recovery. We recommend that attending 3 or 4 meetings initially to find out if the group is right for you.

## Who leads our meetings?

A facilitator and co-facilitator lead our support group meetings. They are volunteers who have either experienced depression themselves or have cared for someone suffering from depression. In some cases our facilitators have attended our support groups as members and have gone on to lead meetings on our behalf. Some facilitators have studied or worked in the field of mental health.

All facilitators are appropriately trained, however they cannot offer advice or opinions about medical matters nor offer counselling. Information booklets written by professionals are available at each group meeting or by contacting the telephone helpline, 08451 20 29 61.

## How long do meetings last?

Meetings usually last between 1 and 1½ hours.

## What happens at group meetings?

The meetings are very informal. After brief introductions and an explanation of group rules, individuals may talk about their experiences, share information and ask questions. No member is obliged to speak and short periods of silence are normal.

Members may talk freely and give their views on different issues, each person ultimately makes up their own mind about matters discussed and what action, if any, they decide to take.

## Is there a fee?

There is no charge for attending group meetings. However, voluntary contributions are welcome.

## What people have said about the Support Groups

*'At my first group meeting I found out so much about my illness and the support I received from other group members was great.'*

*'Just listening to other group members helped me understand so much about my husband's illness.'*

*'It was reassuring to know that there are other people who have the same problems as me and that I am not the only one to feel this way.'*

## Group rules

### Confidentiality

Everything discussed and identity of members is confidential and must not be discussed outside the group. In certain circumstances, Aware is obliged to break confidentiality, i.e. if we feel you are at risk to yourself or others. You will be informed if we feel it is necessary to take this action.

### Respect

You are asked to show respect for other group members and facilitators, including accepting other members' opinions and listening, not interrupting or conducting secondary conversations when others are speaking.

### Behaviour

We operate a zero tolerance policy on disruptive, threatening behaviour or offensive language directed at staff, facilitators or other group members. Any member engaging in this type of behaviour or who in the opinion of the facilitators is under the influence of alcohol or drugs will be asked to leave immediately. Facilitators may suspend a group if they feel safety is an issue.

### Relationships and Boundaries

Aware discourages one-to-one relationships between group members or group members and facilitators outside of the group setting.

### Timekeeping

All members are requested to arrive on time and remain for the entire meeting.