



## Supporting Young People to Take Charge of Their Mental Health

### Depression

#### What is depression?

It's normal and natural to feel down or upset when we face challenging times or circumstances. It is also common for us to experience emotional ups and downs during our teenage years. But when we feel down, stressed and sad for longer periods of two weeks or more, and find this has an impact on our everyday lives then it could be we are suffering from depression. Common symptoms include:

- regularly feeling sad and tearful
- having a lack interest in things we previously enjoyed
- feeling tired, low on energy or exhausted
- difficulty concentrating
- feeling irritable or upset easily
- being overly self-critical
- eating more or less than we usually do
- suffering from unusual aches and pains or illness
- trouble sleeping - difficulties in getting off to sleep or waking up much earlier than usual
- loss of self-confidence and self-esteem
- wanting to withdraw from the world
- feelings of helplessness and hopelessness
- finding it hard to cope generally with life
- feeling really anxious
- developing self-harming issues
- thinking about suicide and death

It's important to remember that depression can happen to anyone, and that we haven't done anything wrong to deserve it happening to us. It also does not mean there is something wrong with us, only that we may need some help and support to get back to feeling like ourselves again.

#### What causes depression?

Depression can be triggered by traumatic events happening in our lives, such as:

- parents divorcing
- suffering abuse
- being bullied
- illness in ourselves or loved ones
- bereavement

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Too much stress can also cause us to become depressed, for example if we feel we aren't coping at school or our lives are too busy. Depression can sometimes run in families, too, which can sometimes make us more genetically prone to becoming depressed.

Sometimes we may not be aware that we are depressed for some time, as we might not realise just how long we have been feeling sad for – it can creep up on us. Also, because some symptoms of depression are physical, we might think we are ill or just run-down for a while before we stop and see how low our mood has become.

### Getting help with depression

Depression can make us feel so detached and isolated from the world that the thought of telling someone how we are feeling can be overwhelming in the extreme. But one of the most important things we can do for ourselves is talk to someone honestly about our issues. The problem with depression is that often we can't cope with it alone – doing so could lead to serious and enduring issues with depression and make our lives miserable – yet it can make us feel ashamed or like it's our fault to the extent we hide it from everyone.

If depression is making us feel unable to physically talk to someone, it can help to instead write down how we are feeling and show it to someone we trust. This could be a parent, friend, teacher, or other relative. If things are seriously affecting us we should also talk to our GP as they can refer us for more intensive help. The act of sharing our worries can help us feel a little better as we won't be shouldering the burden alone any more.

Remember too that we aren't alone in feeling depressed, even though it commonly feels like a lonely experience. Other young people and adults get depressed too, and it is very possible to come out the other side with appropriate help. Some other tips we can use to help with our depression are:

- trying to eat regularly even if they are small meals
- keep a diary to track our mood and emotions
- trying some exercise even if we don't feel like it – it is proven that it can have a positive impact on our mental health
- taking time to try and do some things we enjoy – even if you can only manage this for short periods of time at first it will help us feel a little brighter given time
- keep talking – we don't need to keep depression to ourselves, there is no need to suffer in silence

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### Getting further help

Our GP is there to help us with both physical health problems and mental health problems like depression, and there are a number of treatments that they may feel we would benefit from, depending on the severity of our symptoms:

- they may arrange to see us regularly to see how we are coping and advise us on diet and exercise to help our depressive symptoms
- we may be referred for talking treatments like CBT or counselling to give us an opportunity to work through our issues in greater detail - counselling is confidential and you'll work with a trained counsellor to look at your issues and work through them in your own time and in a safe environment. No one needs to know you attending counselling if you don't wish them to
- sometimes, if our depression is deemed serious we may be prescribed anti-depressant medication to help relieve our symptoms

### How can No5 help?

Learning to effectively deal with depression is important, as not dealt with it can cause longer-term issues and recurrent depression, so it is important to talk to somebody about it if things are becoming too much to handle. Here at No5 we offer free, impartial and confidential support to young people aged 11-25. Come and talk to us - counselling is about listening to, and helping YOU to work through your problems and find more effective ways of dealing with life's issues, in a caring, trusting environment.

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