



Depression

You may have heard the term “being depressed” before. But clinical depression is a lot more than mere sadness or unhappiness. It can be a real illness that is often long lasting, and affects the lives of many people. All people experience feeling sad at some point in their lives, however everyday sadness is not depression, if sad feelings become very intense or last a long time this is where it may start to become depression.

Signs and Symptoms

People who are depressed will sometimes experience constant sadness, loneliness, helplessness, and isolation just to name a few signs. Signs and symptoms that each person experience can differ. Often, those experiencing a depressive episode will also show other physical and psychological symptoms.

These can include:

- People might eat or sleep more or less, and they might wake up more often at night
- Loss of interest in activities that they use to enjoy
- Less energy
- Excessive crying
- Self harm / thoughts of suicide
- Restlessness
- Agitation and irritability
- Headaches
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions

Possible causes of depression

- Biological or Genetic (present at birth, or inherited)
- Psychological (something that effects our mind) e.g.: a stressful event, grief, trauma
- A long term illness
- Social surroundings (environment, housing)
- Historical (stolen surroundings)
- Cultural & Spiritual (being away from country)

What can you do to help someone that may have depression?

Listen non-judgmentally – You really must listen to the person without judging them in any way. The problems that they might perceive to have is not due to them being lazy or a sign of weakness, this is the person attempting to cope with the situation.

Give reassurance and information – Help the person feel like there is hope, attempt to make them understand that, depression is common and that they have an illness. Remember to tell them again that depression is not a weakness, and that while depression takes a while to come about, it sometimes takes a while to get better, but it does get better with the right help.

Encourage the person to get professional help – Remember that there are a number of different professionals out there that want to help; these people can be Doctors, Community Nurses, Counsellors, Psychologists, Psychiatrists, Aboriginal Social & Emotional Wellbeing workers, Aboriginal Health Workers and Traditional healers.

Encourage other supports – Community, family and friends are also an important source of support for a person who may have depression. You will find that the person who may be unwell will get better more quickly and effectively if they have good support around them.

Where can I go for help?

Sometimes we face events in our lives that we are unable to handle ourselves or with help of family and friends and sometimes there are situations in our lives that might be too much for us to cope with. In these cases, there are options out there for you to take.

Some of these options can include:

- Counselling (Someone to yarn too)
- Behavioural and Lifestyle changes (Health Choices)
- See a doctor who might give you medication that can help

If you just want to have a yarn or if you would like to find out more information contact any of your local Community Mental Health or other services listed below.

The Aboriginal Social & Emotional Wellbeing Fact Sheet Series was designed by the Aboriginal Social & Emotional Wellbeing workers David Freeman & Brenda Freeman based at Campbelltown Community Mental Health Service
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