

Dealing with Depression

Depression is a common problem that can affect anyone. Statistics indicate that about 1 in 20 Americans (over 11 million people) get depressed every year. Depression is experienced by young children, the elderly and all ages in between. Depression is a real medical condition that needs to be treated as such. If you experience five or more of the following symptoms for longer than two weeks, if you feel suicidal, or if the symptoms are severe enough to interfere with your daily routine, see your doctor.

Signs of Depression:

- Loss of interest in things once enjoyed
- Feeling sad, blue or down in the dumps
 - Feeling either sluggish or restless
 - Feeling worthless or guilty
- An increase or decrease in appetite or weight
 - Thoughts of death or suicide
- Problems concentrating, thinking, remembering, or making decisions
- Difficulty falling asleep or sleeping more than normal
- Persistent physical complaints, such as headaches, digestive problems, or other aches/pains
 - Sexual problems
- Feeling pessimistic or hopeless
- Feeling anxious or worried
- Loss of motivation

Types of Depression

Situational depression

Is related to factors in an individual's life which cause him/her to experience distress, such as stress, breakup of a relationship, death of a loved one, etc. Situational depression is usually treated effectively by psychotherapy geared toward getting the individual actively re-engaged in his/her life.

Chronic depression

Often has a biological component or chemical imbalance which causes the individual to be depressed most of the time or in cyclical patterns. Chronic depression is generally treated with a combination of medication and psychotherapy. Both types can have as their cause a variety of underlying factors.

Causes of Depression

There are many factors that may contribute to depression. It is most likely caused by a combination of biological, psychological, and environmental conditions. Certain life situations (such as extreme stress or grief) may produce feelings of depression. In some instances, depression may even occur when life is going well. Alcohol and drugs also have been identified as probable contributors to depression.

Treatment for Depression

The longer one avoids dealing with depression, the more difficult it is to overcome. During treatment, the individual and counselor work together to explore feelings and relationships in order to develop new coping skills. This process often involves modifying thoughts and behavioral patterns. Occasionally, medication is prescribed to relieve the most troublesome effects of depression. There are also steps that the depressed person can take to help themselves.

Keys to Helping Yourself

- Get physical exercise
- Stay engaged in activities even if you don't "feel" like it
- Become aware of negative self-statements and change them into positive statements
 - Talk to family or friends
- Take time to do things for yourself, like go to a movie, read a book, etc.
- Avoid drugs and alcohol
- Reward small gains
- Eat well and nutritiously
- Increase your intake of vitamins B and C
- Talk with a psychological professional if the depression persists more than two to three weeks or if you feel suicidal

Helping Depressed Friends

- Be supportive and listen to your friend's concerns
 - Encourage them to see a counselor
- Encourage them to remain active in their life, eat well, and take care of themselves
 - Be patient and also recognize your limits as a friend
- Solicit help from professionals if the depression lasts more than three weeks or if you are concerned about suicide

If you think you, or a friend, might be depressed and particularly if there are thoughts of suicide, call the Wellness Center to speak with one of the counselors. We can be reached at (660) 562-1348

All services are free and confidential.

Other emergency numbers include:

Campus safety: (660) 562-1254

St Francis Mental Health Crisis Line: (660) 562-2227