

UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION



Sad vs Depressed

- Sadness is one of our normal emotions. Being sad opposes being happy. It's a temporary emotional state, often after some kind of difficult event. You are sad about what happened, over time this feeling fades and you move on. Emotions tend to be peaks that eventually go back to a neutral state.
- Depression on the other hand is an abnormal state, a mental illness/disorder. Unlike an emotion, depression is more chronic. Different types exist, but the one everyone knows about is Major Depressive Disorder. This type comes in episodes, but these can last for weeks and aren't a one time thing.

UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION

- Depression can strike at any time. There needs to be no apparent reason.
- One can have the perfect life, a family, lots of friends, wealth, whatever is perfect for you. But despite having everything that should make them happy, they are not.
- Being "sad" can be part of depression, but the most debilitating aspect isn't sadness. It's the way you see everything in life - in a negative way.... it's the lack of energy and emotion that makes getting through the day absolutely exhausting and without reward. It makes living a chore you rather not do.
- You are irritable all the time, like the shortest fuse ever. Which can lead to either lash out or break down, neither is what you want.
- You can't think right, always feel guilt, no creativity, can't even make the simplest of decision.
- Depression goes far beyond sadness, it takes over your life...

What causes depression?

- A chemical imbalance in the brain
- Death or a loss
- Abuse
- Certain medications
- Conflict / personal problems
- Genetics
- Substance use
- Being around someone else that is depressed

How do I know if I am depressed?

- You may be depressed if, for more than two weeks, you've felt sad, down or miserable most of the time, or have lost interest or pleasure in usual activities, and have also experienced several of the signs and symptoms across at least three of the categories below.
- It's important to remember that we all experience some of these symptoms from time to time, and it may not necessarily mean you're depressed. Equally, not everyone who is experiencing depression will have all of these symptoms.

SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

Emotions

- ✓ Sadness
- ✓ Anxiety
- ✓ Guilt
- ✓ Anger
- ✓ Mood swings
- ✓ Irritability

Thoughts

- ✓ Self-criticism
- ✓ Impaired memory
- ✓ Indecisiveness
- ✓ Confusion
- ✓ Thoughts of death and suicide

Physical

- ✓ Chronic fatigue
- ✓ Lack of energy
- ✓ Sleeping too much
- ✓ Sleeping too little
- ✓ Weight gain / loss
- ✓ Lack of motivation
- ✓ Substance abuse

Behavior

- ✓ Withdrawal from others
- ✓ Neglect of responsibilities
- ✓ Changes in personal appearance

Where do I go for help?

- Speak to a parent / teacher
- Speak to your school's psychologist / social worker
- Speak to someone you trust about how you feel
- Speak to your GP about options available to you
- Call a helpline

Hotline numbers

South African Depression & Anxiety Group - SADAG

(0800) 12 13 14

SADAG is Africa's largest mental health support and advocacy group.

Lifeline South Africa

(0861) 322 322

24-hour crisis intervention service. "Emotional First Aid station".

SADAG Mental Health Line

(011) 234 4837

SADAG is Africa's largest mental health support and advocacy group.

Akeso Psychiatric Response Unit 24 Hour

0861 HELP US (4357 87)

The hotline is manned by experienced counselling staff, who are trained to contain and manage the immediate crisis, provide transportation and arrange the required admission to the nearest Psychiatric Clinic, if so required. If the caller is in crisis, the intervention vehicle is dispatched, but if it is not an emergency, the caller is transferred to a registered counsellor for counselling and an appropriate referral.