

Depression – What you need to know

At Vida Psychology we strongly believe in providing individuals with information to make sense of what they are feeling so then they can start implementing strategies to address what brings them to us in the first place.

Depression is unfortunately one of the most common issues affecting Australians. On average, **one in five women and one in eight men** are likely to experience depression in their lifetime. Following are some facts on depression we hope will assist you and your loved ones.

What is depression?

We all experience sadness from time, however if you experience 5 or more of the following for at least two consecutive weeks you may be experiencing clinical depression:

Depression symptoms

- Lowered or depressed mood – this can be being extremely tearful or sad.
- Social isolation – you don't feel like seeing family and friends and withdraw from people (e.g. refusing catch ups with people, stop returning phone calls, ceasing social media interactions, etc).
- Feeling restless.
- Loss of interest and motivation – you cease enjoying activities that once were enjoyable.
- Feelings of worthlessness – you feel you are not worthwhile or good enough.
- Feeling guilty – you blame yourself and see yourself as a burden.
- Sleep disturbances – either you sleep a lot (hypersomnia) or very little (insomnia).
- Changes in weight and appetite – you tend to over eat or very little.
- Reduced memory and ability to concentrate and focus– difficulties remembering things and concentrating.
- Difficulties making decisions.
- Irritable- being snappy and irritable easily.
- Energy reduction – you feel constantly exhausted regardless of having enough sleep.
- Thoughts of death or suicide – thoughts of dying or feeling that life is not worth living (e.g. “it would be best if I wasn't here”, “ I wish could just go to sleep and never wake up”, you make plans to harm yourself).
- Loss of libido – loss of interest to engage in sexual intimacy.

Causes of Depression

There are various reasons why people experience depression. For some people depression can be triggered by stressful life events such as a relationship break up, the death of a loved one, losing a job, or physical illness. For some there may be factors such as:

- **Family history** – having a close family member with a history of depression can be a contributing factor. It is important to know this is only a contributing factor, as such you are at a higher risk of developing depression as compared to the general population. It does not mean you will develop depression.

- **Personality traits** – people who tend to worry excessively or dwell on negative events, and those who are critical of themselves are more likely to develop depression.
- **Childhood experiences** – people who have experience neglect or abuse as children including bullying are more likely to develop depression as adults.
- **Brain biology and chemistry** – changes in levels of chemicals such as serotonin, norepinephrine and dopamine play a role in developing depression.

Treatments for Depression

At Vida Psychology we ensure to use only evidence based psychological interventions. Following are some examples:

- **Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT):** It is an approach that can bring long lasting relief after short term treatment. It focuses on individuals' views and interpretations of themselves and the world and how these impact on their moods and behaviour. The objective is to identify these interpretations, challenge and replace them with more helpful interpretations. One important element of CBT is to engage on behavioural tasks that challenge those interpretations. This allows individuals the opportunity to see firsthand the inaccuracy of their views. This in turn facilitates change.
- **Interpersonal psychotherapy (IPT):** It focuses on identifying and addressing interpersonal relationships and the expectations of others that may contribute to the person's depression. The objective is to help people develop assertive communication, increase adaptability, increase supports and develop new ways to resolve conflict and nurture relationships.
- **Short term psychodynamic psychotherapy (STPP):** It focuses on increasing the person's awareness of their own thoughts, feelings and motivations. The objective is to identify barriers that may get in the way of having healthy relationships, effective communication and daily functioning.

How to get help

Your Family Doctor/ General Practitioner is a great first point of call. He/ she has established relationships with Psychologists and Psychiatrists highly trained in treating depression. If they believe you would benefit from seeing one, they will make a referral through a Mental Health Treatment Plan and will recommend the right person for you.

At Vida Psychology we take pride in fostering relationships with GPs. Our Psychologists have extensive experience in effectively treating depression.

“Your Shared Care Practice: *Working together to support patients and their GPs*”

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