

AM I DEPRESSED – OR DO I JUST HAVE THE BLUES?

We all have times when we feel down. It's normal to feel sad when a relationship ends, a good friend moves away or someone we care about dies. The stress of a heavy study load, financial difficulties or unemployment also affects our mood. However, the gloomy feelings usually pass and we still experience happy times with friends or family.

Sometimes the sad feelings don't go away – we stop enjoying things that used to be fun. We might have difficulty keeping up with study, or find it hard to even get out of bed in the morning.

How will I know if I'm depressed?

If you've been feeling miserable more often than not over the past two weeks or more, and you've stopped enjoying things that used to be fun, you might be depressed. Check the symptoms below - if three or more seem to apply, it is possible you are experiencing a bout of depression.

- Finding it hard to get motivated or feel interested in things.
- Wanting to avoid friends and everyday activities.
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions.
- Losing interest in eating, or overeating.
- Losing weight, without dieting, or gaining weight.
- Having difficulty getting to sleep, waking during the night, or waking too early and not being able to get back to sleep.
- Wanting to sleep all the time.
- Thinking about, or planning suicide.
- Having unpleasant, negative thoughts (like feeling guilty or that you are a bad or unworthy person).
- Getting pains or headaches that don't seem to have any physical cause.

How did I get depressed?

Sometimes stress builds up in our lives and overwhelms our ability to cope. You may have lost someone you love, had a baby, or been too busy for too long. Ongoing stress - coping on a low income, facing rising debt, or feeling lonely and isolated - can lead to depression. Sometimes people get depressed for no obvious reason; the heavy feelings

just seem to come out of the blue.

What if it's the blues? It may still be useful for you to discuss your worries and low mood with a professional Counsellor. At Student Services we encourage you to come for assistance before little problems become big ones. This may prevent disruption of your studies.

Ok, so I may be depressed – what now?

Depression is common - approximately one in seven people will experience depression at some stage in their lives. Depression can also be treated, and it's important to treat it like any other illness and seek help. Depression involves changes in brain chemistry and can influence the way we respond to our world. Options for dealing with depression include:

Talking with a Counsellor who will:

- Help you learn skills for solving problems, planning ahead and improving interactions with others.
- Help you see the positive side of yourself, others, and your circumstances.

See your doctor to discuss the possibility of using antidepressant medicine to correct the imbalance of chemicals in the brain.

Often counselling, together with lifestyle changes (e.g. exercise, reducing stress, cutting down on alcohol) is useful for helping depression. In some cases medication may be necessary to help resolve a more severe or longstanding bout of depression.

If you think you might be depressed, talk to one of our counsellors, or to your doctor.

Counselling Office
Student Services
Robertson Library
566-0616

Health Centre
Marian Hall
566-0488