

About Dealing With Depression

Depression is an extreme low mood that lasts a long time and makes a person feel sad, irritable or empty. Many people, including many teens, have suffered in this way. A depressed person:

- 🗨️ has much less energy to do activities
- 🗨️ feels like nothing matters.
- 🗨️ sees life in a negative way.
- 🗨️ feels like it will never get better

But depressed people do get better and depression does end. There are effective treatments and self-help skills to deal with depression. Health care professionals give depression treatments, but you can learn self-help skills and apply them to your own life. This guide teaches a set of antidepressant skills you can use to overcome depression. Sometimes the skills can be used on their own, when the depression isn't too severe. Sometimes they have to be used along with treatments by professionals.

Dealing with Depression is meant for teens who have been coping with depressed mood. Some of the things in this guide will make more sense to younger teens and some will make more sense to older ones. But check it out for yourself. Decide which parts of this guide make sense for your life. You might start by skimming it and reading the stuff that is most interesting to you. Take a look at the Table of Contents to get an idea of what it's about. When you are done skimming you can go back to the start and work through each section at your own pace. There are no right or wrong answers and no tests!

Give yourself time and be patient; you can return to sections or ideas at any time. If you are reading this on a computer, save a copy for later. Print any sections that you may want to take with you. If you have a printed copy, keep it somewhere private so you can read it on your own time.

We've suggested things to do, write down or think about. Try to think of situations or examples that make the most sense for you. If there are ideas that don't make sense or that you are not sure about, check with someone you trust. It will be easier to learn the skills if you write the exercises in each skill section. You can write in the boxes we provide, in your own notebook or in a computer document. If you're nervous about other people reading what you've written, keep it private... but remember:

If you ever get thoughts of harming yourself, tell someone who can help.

What is Depression?

Depression is not . . .

Most times when you feel down, you're not depressed. Feeling sad or low is a big part of life and can't be avoided. When something goes wrong in your life, whether it's an argument with a friend, a bad mark on a test, or a fight with your parents, your mood might drop.

If you feel especially sad or irritable because of this situation, sleeping poorly, not wanting to see your friends, not much appetite or too much eating, then you're probably experiencing low mood. Low mood will typically go away in a week or two, especially if there's an improvement in the situation that started it.

Depression is . . .

But suppose it doesn't go away and just gets worse. You might be depressed . . .

- ⚡ if you feel very low mood or almost no interest in your life, every day, and this feeling continues for at least two weeks; **AND**
- ⚡ if you have other problems like:
 - big changes in weight or appetite;
 - not being able to sleep enough or sleeping too much;

- feeling that you are always restless or slowed-down;
- thinking that you are worthless or guilty;
- feeling really tired most of the time;
- feeling numb or empty;
- having a lot of trouble concentrating or making decisions;
- thinking about death or suicide.

MYTH: It's normal for teenagers to be moody: teens don't suffer from "real" depression.

FACT: Depression is more than just being moody. And it can affect people at any age, including teenagers.

<http://www.psychologyinfo.com/depression/teens.htm>

What is Depression?

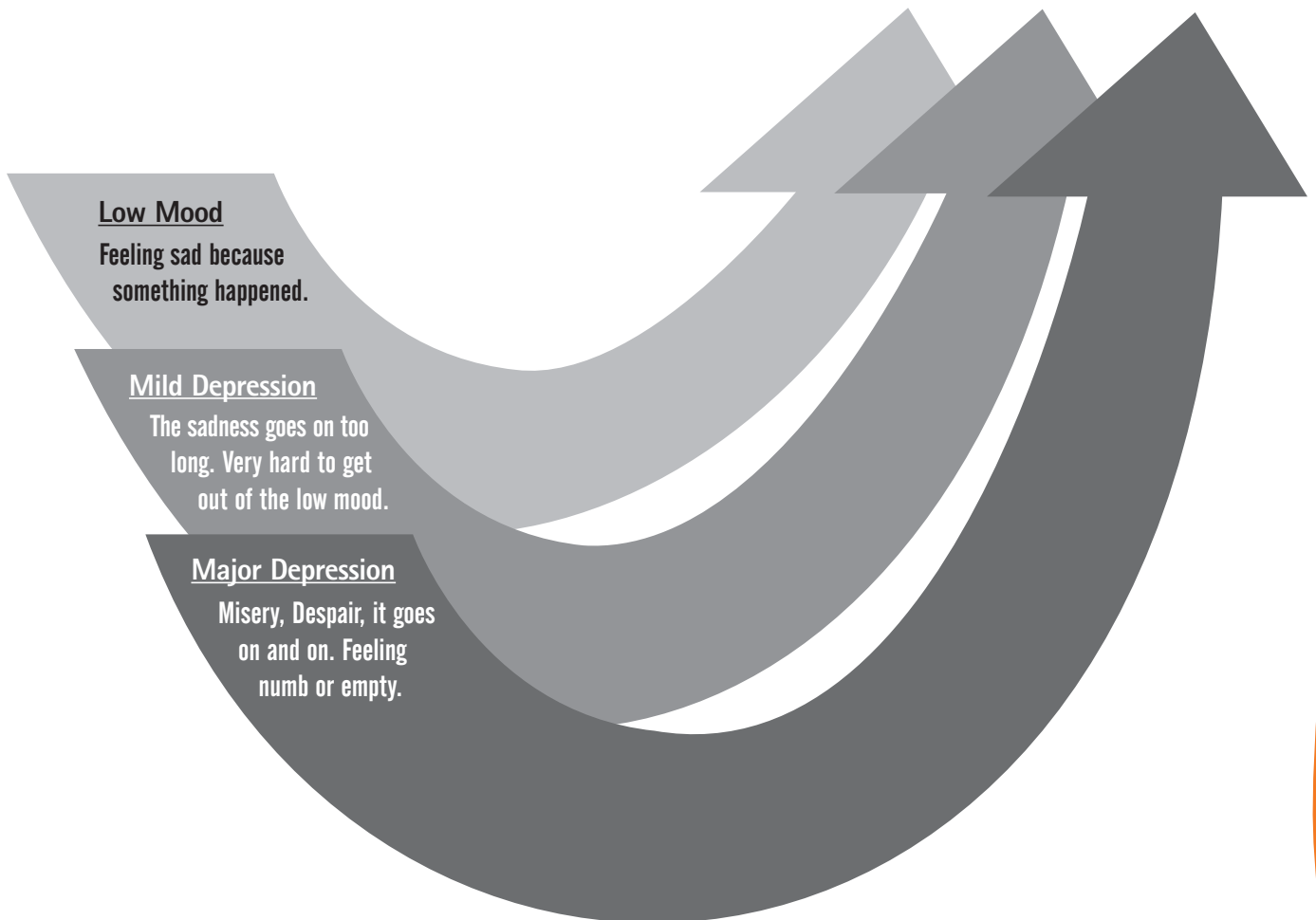
The two most common types of depression are called **mild depression** and **major depression**.

Each of these includes the same kinds of problems (the ones we've listed above) but major depression is more severe.

Usually, when a teen gets depressed, it's the mild kind. You can check whether you have a

depression by talking to a health professional (family doctor, psychiatrist, psychologist, clinical social worker, mental health counsellor, or mental health nurse). Or you can visit your local mental health centre.

Feeling Ok



What is Depression?

If you think you have depression . . .

If you think you have depression, it is important that you find support. The skills in this guide are meant to help you with your depression, but you shouldn't have to do it alone. Talking it over with someone you trust can help you understand your problems or put them in perspective. If you continue to feel depressed, seek the help of a healthcare professional. This can be a family

doctor, psychiatrist, psychologist, clinical social worker, mental health counsellor, or mental health nurse. They can help you with a number of different treatments for depression. A good thing about most of these treatments is that they work well alongside those you learn from this guide.

If you feel like hurting yourself . . .

For many people, depression makes life seem hopeless and unmanageable. Most depressed people feel this way from time to time. For a small number of individuals this feeling of hopelessness gets so strong they begin to think that life itself is not worth living. If this happens to you or someone you know, it's time to get help. Talk to an adult you trust so you can find

a health care professional to help you get past these feelings. If you can't wait for an appointment, there are a number of crisis lines, staffed 24/7, that you should call. Just go to your yellow pages and look under *Crisis Centres* to find the numbers in your area. Remember, things can get better.

MYTH: Talking about depression only makes it worse.

FACT: Talking about your feelings to someone who can help, like a physician, counsellor or psychologist, is the first step towards beating depression. Talking to a close friend can also provide you with the support and encouragement you need to talk to your parents or school counsellor.

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