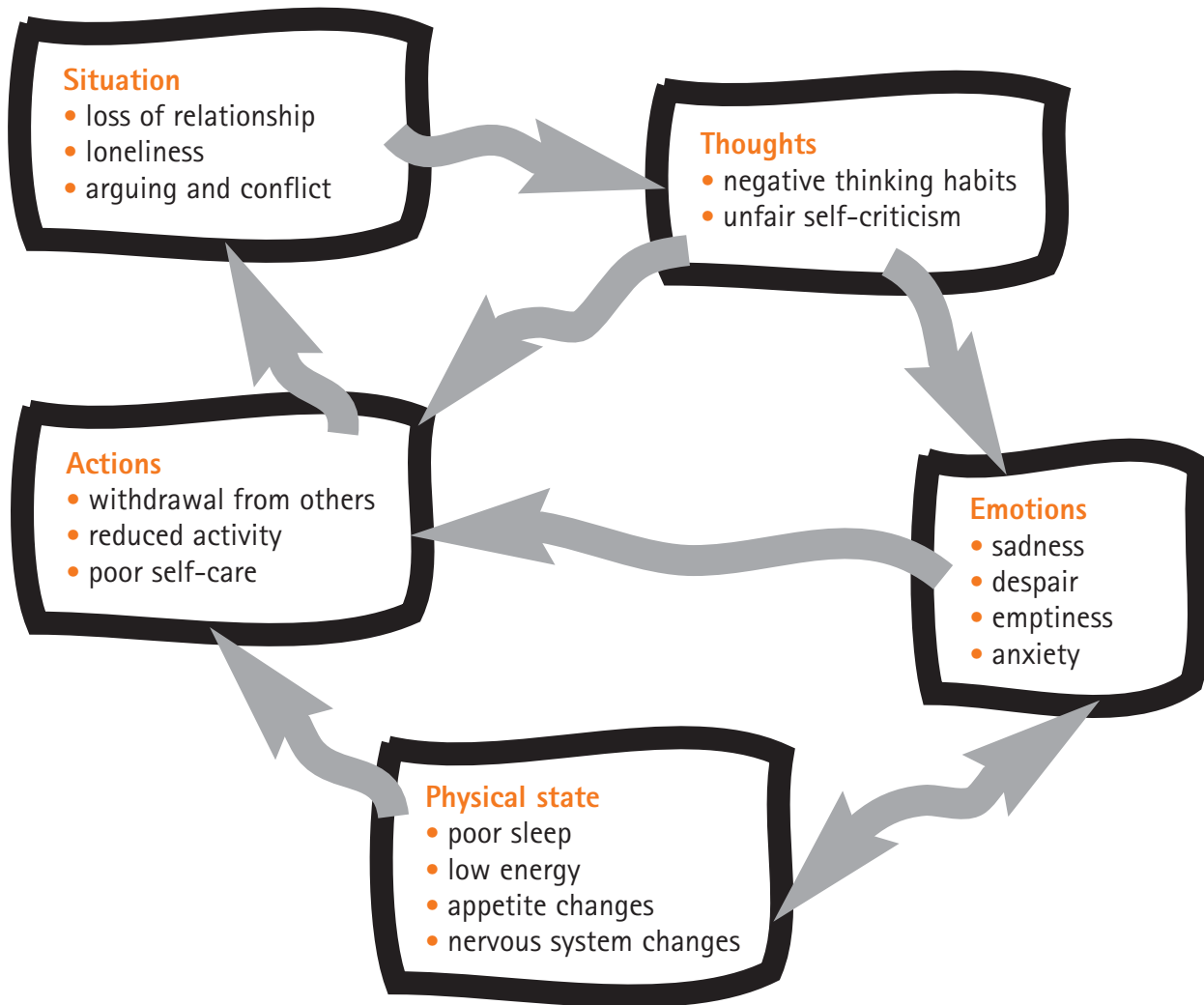


What Causes Depression?

Depression is not simple. Researchers have identified five different parts of your life that can cause depression or keep it going. These parts are: your situation, your thoughts, your emotions, your physical state and your actions. These five parts all affect

each other. The way you act changes your situation, the way you think about yourself changes your feelings, the way you feel changes your physical state, and so on. So we can think of these five parts as part of a circle of depression.



Let's take a closer look at these 5 parts.

What Causes Depression?

Situation

Depression often starts out with difficult and stressful situations — things like losing a friendship or doing poorly in school. If your attempts to handle the situation don't work out, you can start to feel overwhelmed and hopeless. Then you might get depressed. Some situations that increase the chance of a depression:



loss of a relationship

This might be:
the death of someone you care for; losing a good friend; or breaking up with someone.

conflict with another person

This might be:
constant arguing with your parents; having a disagreement with a friend that you can't work out; being bullied; or getting in trouble often with a particular teacher.

loneliness

This might happen because:
you are a shy person; your family moved; or you haven't yet found others with the same interests.

poor school performance

This might happen because:
you're feeling down and having trouble concentrating; you have a learning disability; or the work is just really hard for you. Sometimes, using alcohol or drugs causes teens to have trouble with schoolwork.

That doesn't mean people only get depressed when things are going badly. Some people get depressed when their life has been going

smoothly: depression just seems to come out of nowhere! Antidepressant skills are just as useful for these people, helping them to recover.



What Causes Depression?

Thoughts

Each of us has our own way of thinking about situations and how we think has a big effect on how we feel. Depressed teens often think about situations and about themselves in a way that is *negatively distorted*. This means that

their thinking is slanted toward a negative way of looking at things. This kind of thinking exaggerates how bad a situation is and ignores positive events.

unrealistic negative thoughts about your situation

Seeing only problems and ignoring good things. If a friend passes in the hallway with only a quick hello, you take this as proof that no one really likes you, while ignoring that someone else said hi and smiled.

unfair negative thoughts about yourself

Judging yourself in a harsh way, setting really high standards for yourself, putting yourself down. Any failures you've had or mistakes you've made come to your mind clearly – but you exaggerate how bad the failure or mistake was. Not only that, you forget what you've accomplished or the good things you've done. It seems to you like the positive things don't really count.

unrealistic thoughts about your future

Exaggerating the chance that bad things will happen, imagining the worst, looking at the future in a gloomy way that doesn't really make sense. For example, someone with depressive thinking who doesn't make a hockey team might imagine that he won't get picked in the future and will never be able to play league hockey.



**A person with depressive thinking
can become discouraged or hopeless
even when things are going well**

What Causes Depression?

Emotions

Depression usually begins with feelings of discouragement or sadness. If it gets really bad, the depressed person can feel swallowed up by hopelessness. Many depressed people feel like they no longer get enjoyment from things they used to love doing. If depression gets extreme, there might be a kind of numbness or emptiness, like having no feelings. It's as though the pain becomes so strong that your mind simply switches off your emotions.

Remember that depressed people think about their situation and themselves in an unrealistically negative way. Since their emotions are based on this distorted way of thinking, then their emotions can also be unrealistically negative. It may be hard to think of emotions as unrealistic. But imagine a man who thinks that airplane travel is very dangerous, who believes that airplanes are constantly falling out of the sky. He will be very frightened when flying; but his fear comes from unrealistic thinking and so it is not realistic.

Physical State

Depression often includes different kinds of physical problems. One of these is difficulty with sleep – a depressed person can't fall asleep or sleeps too much. Beside sleep problems, depressed teens often feel like they have no energy, like they have no appetite or like they're always hungry. They can have difficulty concentrating on schoolwork. Finally, some depressed teens develop a kind of "imbalance" in how their nervous system operates.

The physical changes that go along with depression make it harder to deal with problems or even to learn the skills described in this guide. For some depressed teenagers, medication may be helpful in restoring sleep, concentration and physical energy, allowing them to learn and try out the antidepressant skills.

Before reaching the age of 18, about one in five young Canadians will experience an episode of major depressive disorder.

http://www.imshealthcanada.com/htmen/1_0_14.htm

What Causes Depression?

Actions

People who are depressed often behave in ways that make depression worse.

These include:

withdrawing from family and friends

Depressed people feel like others don't want to be with them or they don't feel like being with others. So, they pull back from friends and family, turn down invitations and stop making efforts to connect. This leaves them cut off from other people.

not taking care of yourself

When people are depressed, they feel like they don't care about what they eat or how they take care of themselves. So, they often stop eating properly or exercising. They may abuse alcohol or drugs. This makes them feel physically weak and perhaps ashamed of their lack of willpower.

not doing enjoyable activities

Depressed teens might feel too tired or unmotivated to stay involved with activities they used to find enjoyable. They might give up fun activities like sports, listening to music, reading or favourite hobbies. But inactivity can become a habit. The less you join in fun activities, the less you feel able to enjoy them and the less you do. Inactivity feeds depression.

