

What Can You Do About Depression?

MILD Depression

- 🌀 Talking to family and trusted friends about how you've been feeling is usually a good thing to do. They can help you to figure out solutions to some of the problems you've been dealing with; besides, just knowing that people care about you can be helpful.
- 🌀 Writing about problems you're facing, your feelings and thoughts, and possible solutions can help you to understand what you're going through and what choices you have.
- 🌀 Speak to a health professional (family doctor, psychiatrist, psychologist, clinical social

worker, mental health counsellor, or mental health nurse) if you think you might be depressed. A professional can help you figure out what's been going on and can make useful suggestions.

- 🌀 In some cases, antidepressant medications can be helpful in overcoming mild depression. But for most adolescents with mild depression, the answer does not lie in medication.



Learning and practicing the skills in this guide, developing **antidepressant skills, is likely to be very helpful in overcoming mild depression.**

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MAJOR Depression

- 🌀 Talking to family and trusted friends about how you've been feeling is still helpful.
- 🌀 Writing about problems you're facing, your feelings and thoughts, and possible solutions is also still helpful.
- 🌀 Definitely see your family physician if you think you might be depressed. Major depression is a serious problem and should be diagnosed by a family physician, psychiatrist or psychologist. You might visit your local mental health centre, where these mental health professionals are usually available.
- 🌀 One effective treatment for major depression in adolescents is cognitive behavioural

therapy [CBT]. CBT is a talking therapy that teaches new skills for thinking and acting more effectively. This guide is based on CBT methods.

- 🌀 Another effective treatment is interpersonal therapy [IPT], a talking therapy that teaches new skills for dealing with friends, teachers and family.
- 🌀 Antidepressant medications are often helpful in overcoming major depression in adolescents. But they don't seem to be as effective for adolescents as they are for adults: talk it over with your physician.



Learning and practicing the skills in this guide, developing **antidepressant skills, is likely to help in overcoming major depression. BUT remember that the skills taught in this guide will not be enough by themselves to fix something this serious. If you have a major depression, you should seek professional help.**

More About **MEDICATION**

Antidepressant medications are helpful to depressed adults, but research has shown that they are not as effective in young people, often no more effective than a sugar pill or placebo. Medications need to be used with other treatments and coping strategies.

Up to half of teens diagnosed with depression may be prescribed medication by their doctors, especially if depression is more severe and goes on for a long time, or when they also have other

problems such as anxiety which might be helped by medication. New research is telling us that the combination of medication and self-help skills is better than medication alone. If you are prescribed a medication, ask your doctor about what to expect in terms of improvements and potential side effects. Medication should be accompanied by coping strategies as described in this self-help guide, or other psychological treatments.



A recent scientific study compared cognitive-behaviour therapy, antidepressant medications and a combination of both of them with a control condition. The study concluded that the combination of the two was the most beneficial for moderate to seriously depressed teens.

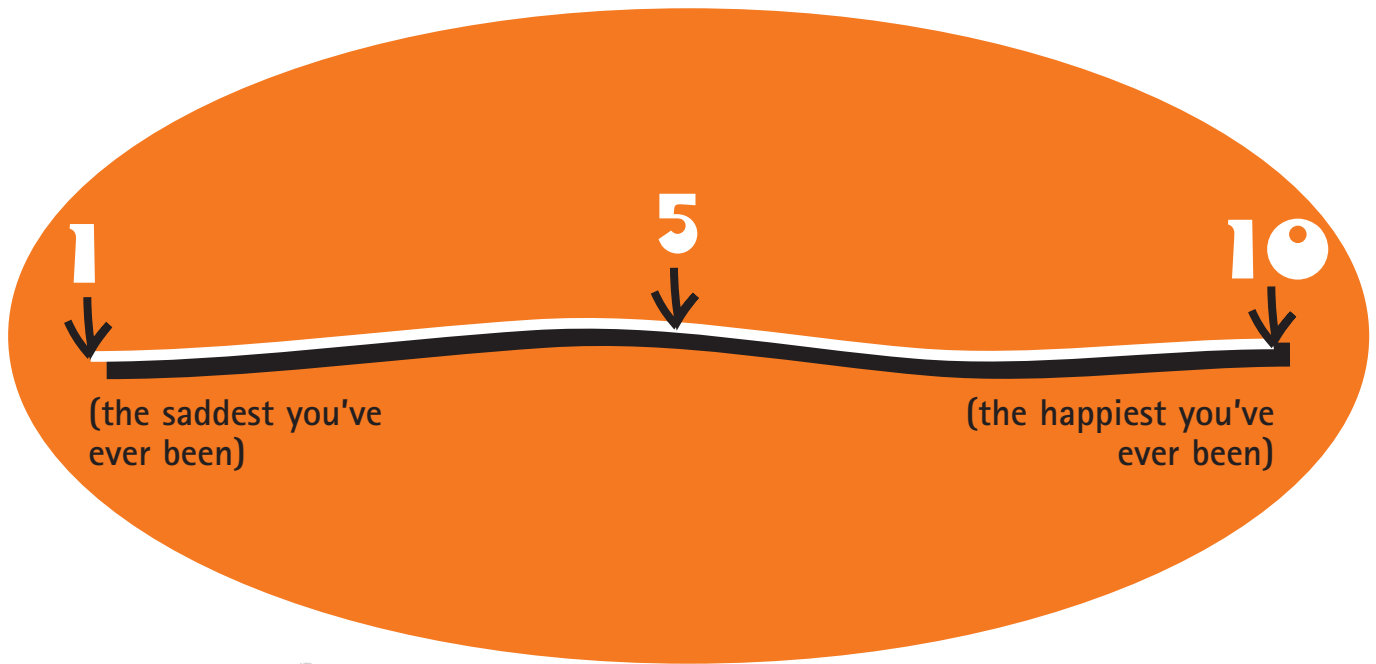
Journal of the American Medical Association, 2004, 292, No.7

— **What Can You Do About Depression?** —

Self-monitoring

Knowing how you're feeling is one thing, but how do you describe it? Words like sad or depressed can tell about a mood, but they don't really explain how upset you are. The word depression is used a lot these days to mean anything from "I'm really depressed about my parents' divorce" to "I'm so depressed, the concert sold out!"

Being able to accurately describe your mood is important if you want to look for changes. Most people work well with a simple mood line like this:



Try putting your mood right now somewhere on this 1-10 line.

As you work through this guide go back and check on your mood by giving it a number and keep track.