

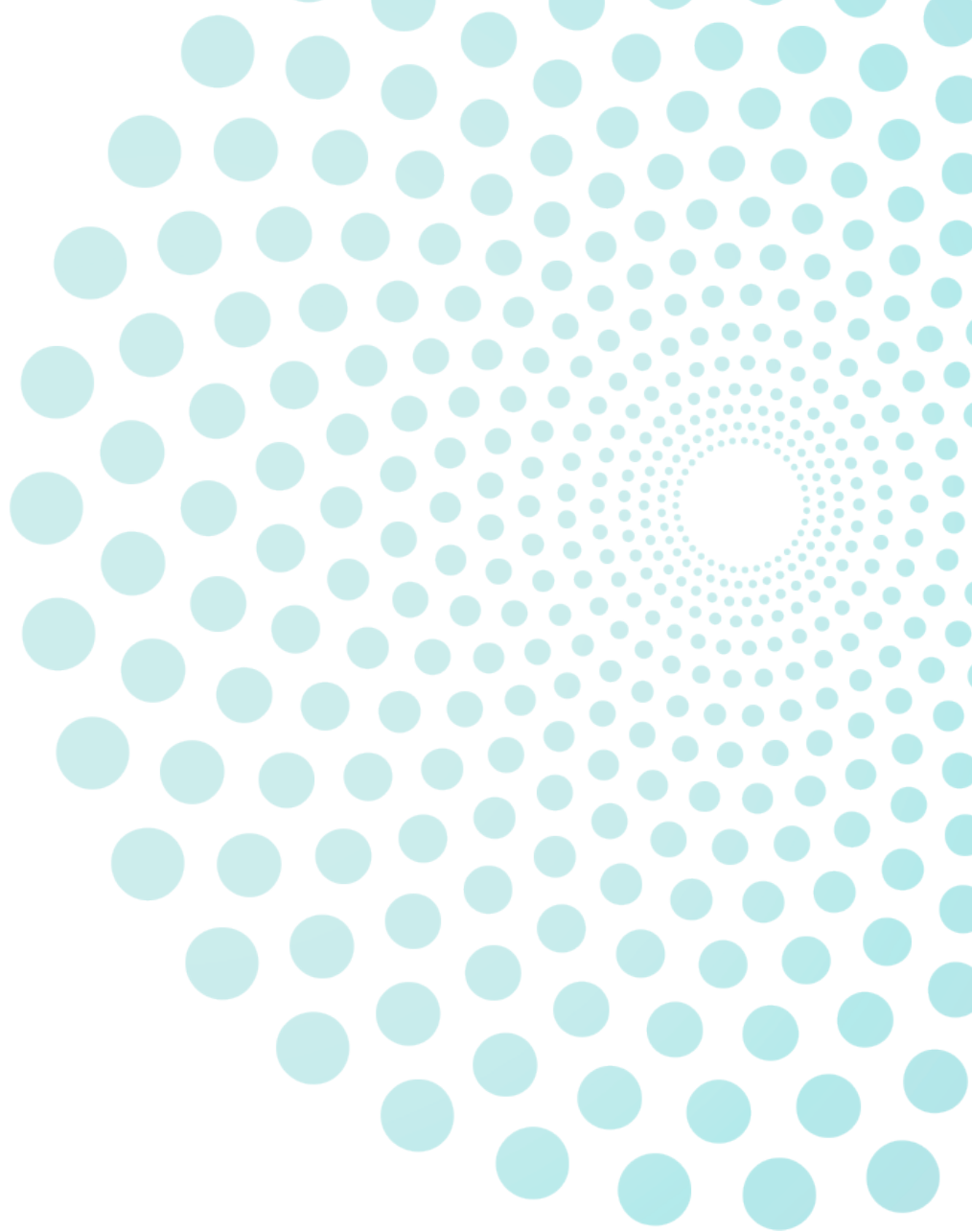
A GUIDE TO

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# DEPRESSION & SUICIDE PREVENTION

Keeping our families safe and strong.





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### **Suicide Crisis Help (Available 24/7)**

13 11 14 (from a landline, pay phone or mobile)

or visit:

<https://www.lifeline.org.au/get-help/topics/lifeline-services>

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## ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource provides information on:

- depression and suicide prevention
- emotional and mental health wellbeing
- mental illness and mental disorders
- suicidal thinking
- warning signs of depression and suicidal thinking
- impacts of depression and suicide on yourself and others

You can use this resource to:

- get some tips and hints for building mental and emotional health and wellbeing
- use strategies to manage depression
- build skills to help gain support if you experience suicidal thinking
- find out what to do to support someone with depression or suicidal thinking

“Depression and suicidal thinking can happen to anyone when stresses in life build to an overwhelming level.”



## WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH & EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Mental health and emotional wellbeing is about:

- having adequate access to life's essentials (food, clothing and shelter)
- being connected with others
- possessing skills to deal with stress
- building and maintaining fulfilling relationships.

Take a look at above image about mental health and wellbeing. It shows all the

aspects of life that contribute to good mental health and wellbeing.

Mental health and emotional wellbeing doesn't mean that you don't go through challenging and difficult events in life. Everyone does.

Mental health and emotional wellbeing means having skills and the resilience to bounce back to enjoy life again after difficulties.

# DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

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Mental health, or emotional wellbeing as it is sometimes called, is about feeling positive and hopeful about your life and the future.

It is also about having realistic thoughts and creating a balanced approach to activities and achievements.

Mental health is about being able to:

- realise your own abilities
- cope with normal stresses of life
- contribute productively to your community
- enjoy meaningful relationships with family and friends.
- have a full and creative life.

Depression and suicidal thinking can happen to anyone. When stresses in life

build to an overwhelming level depression and/or suicidal thinking can occur.

Emotional well-being takes in many areas of your life including:

- work and leisure
- family, friendships and close relationships
- love, worth and control over your life
- spirituality and positive beliefs
- emotional awareness
- problem solving
- health, nutrition and exercise
- creativity and sense of humour
- gender and cultural identity
- managing stress.

People already suffering from depression or other mental health issues are also at risk of suicidal thinking.

## CHECK YOUR OWN MENTAL HEALTH & EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

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Reflecting on your own emotional wellbeing is just as important as looking after your physical health. Feeling emotionally strong and well gives you the ability to cope effectively with life's ups and downs. Think about how you would answer these questions about your emotional wellbeing.


- \_\_\_\_\_ Do you feel happy and satisfied with your life most of the time?
- \_\_\_\_\_ When you feel down, do you get support from friends, family or community?
- \_\_\_\_\_ If you feel down for a long time do you know where to get help?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Do you take time out for yourself to do the things you like doing?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Do you feel happy about your body image most of the time?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Do you enjoy spending time with your loved ones, family and friends?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Do you have strategies and supportive approaches to deal with stress, unexpected events, family illness and financial hardships?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Do you have a sense of belonging to your family, friends, work colleagues and community?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Do you value yourself and others?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Do you laugh and have fun on a regular basis?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Do you have control over your own life?

If you answered '**No**' to most of these questions you may be experiencing depression.

# WARNING SIGNS OF DEPRESSION & SUICIDAL THINKING

There are often warning signs when a person is suffering from depression and/or is having suicidal thoughts. When a person is feeling emotionally or mentally unwell their behaviour, thoughts and feelings can often indicate that things are not okay.

BEHAVIOURS	FEELINGS	THOUGHTS
lying in bed all day	hopeless	'What's the point?'
not going to work	miserable	'It's all hopeless.'
lack of motivation	nothing to live for	'I don't care if I die.'
statements such as: 'Nobody would miss me if I was gone,' 'I'm going to kill myself'	trapped	'I wish I was dead.'
increased use of drugs or alcohol	sad	'I don't care about anything.'
unable to sleep or sleeping all the time	worthless	'What's the point of getting up in the morning?'
taking risks and behaving in a risky manner (driving dangerously)	rage, anger, agitation	'It doesn't matter what I do, I'm hopeless.'
talking about suicide or ending it all	tired and zapped of energy	'People would be better off without me.'
withdrawing from friends and family	alone and isolated	'I just can't be bothered anymore.'
no joy in doing usual activities	flat and lifeless	'I just want to go to sleep and never wake up.'
tired, sick and run down	overwhelmed	'Nothing good ever happens to me.'



**Regularly take time out for yourself to help you build your emotional wellbeing.**

## BUILDING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING & MENTAL HEALTH

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There are a number of actions you can take to help build your emotional wellbeing. Take a look at some of these suggestions.

- Regularly take time out for yourself to recharge your batteries and relax.
- Join a relaxation class (for example, yoga, meditation, guided visualisation).
- Exercise daily (for example, take a walk, run).
- Enjoy nature (for example, look around, walk around, see and enjoy the things nature has to offer).
- Use your inner voice to affirm that you are a great person (for example, 'I can do this', 'I am a worthwhile person', 'I am a good person').
- Check your emotional wellbeing on a regular basis. Ask yourself 'Do I have any worries niggling in the background?', 'Am I enjoying today?', 'How can I best manage this situation?'
- Pamper yourself – get a new outfit, hairdo. Go on an adventure.
- Develop a hobby (for example, painting, photography, fishing, knitting, singing, playing an instrument)
- Learn something new (for example, computer, a language, creative writing or carpentry)
- Build self-discipline (for example, using self control)
- Do things to help others

## MAINTAIN PHYSICAL HEALTH

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Being physically healthy is an important part of mental health and emotional wellbeing.

In fact, when you improve your physical health you will feel better emotionally.

This is because exercise releases a chemical called endorphin that lifts your mood and gives you energy.

Tips for keeping physically healthy:

- Get seven to eight hours rest to function at your best.

- Eat good healthy foods.
- Exercise to lift your mood and relieve stress.
- Get as least 10 to 15 minutes in the sun per day.
- Avoid drugs and limit alcohol.
- Walk for 30 minutes per day.
- Learn relaxation and stress reduction skills (for example, meditation, yoga).

# WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

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When someone feels sad, down and without hope over a long period of time (for example, weeks, months, years) they may be suffering from depression.

Depression is not just feeling down it is a serious illness that can have an impact on your mental health and wellbeing.

Depression includes the loss of pleasure or joy in the usual things of life. These symptoms affect all areas of the person's life.

Usually depression is not the result of a single event. There are a number of things that can put someone at greater risk of developing a depressive disorder.

Events such as a relationship ending could trigger a depressive disorder.

Some of the things that put people at greater risk of depression include:

- limited access to adequate food, clothing and shelter
- alcohol and drug use issues
- family history that includes depression
- a personality tendency to worry and feel anxious about everything
- having a serious mental illness such as schizophrenia
- extreme stress.

Chemical changes happen in the brain when someone is severely depressed however it is not always possible to explain why certain people suffer from depression.

# WHAT IS SUICIDAL THINKING?

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Suicide is the act of taking your own life. Sometimes people can die from accidents such as a car accident or drug overdose. The difference between accidental death and suicide has to do with intent.

The different factors that can drive someone to suicide are called triggers.

Dealing with high levels of stress can be dangerous and can trigger suicidal thoughts. Stress can be immediate or long term.

Feelings of deep hopelessness and thoughts of not wanting to live are called suicidal thinking.

Suicidal thinking can be divided into two categories:

- actively thinking and planning suicide
- passively desiring to die but without a plan to make it happen.

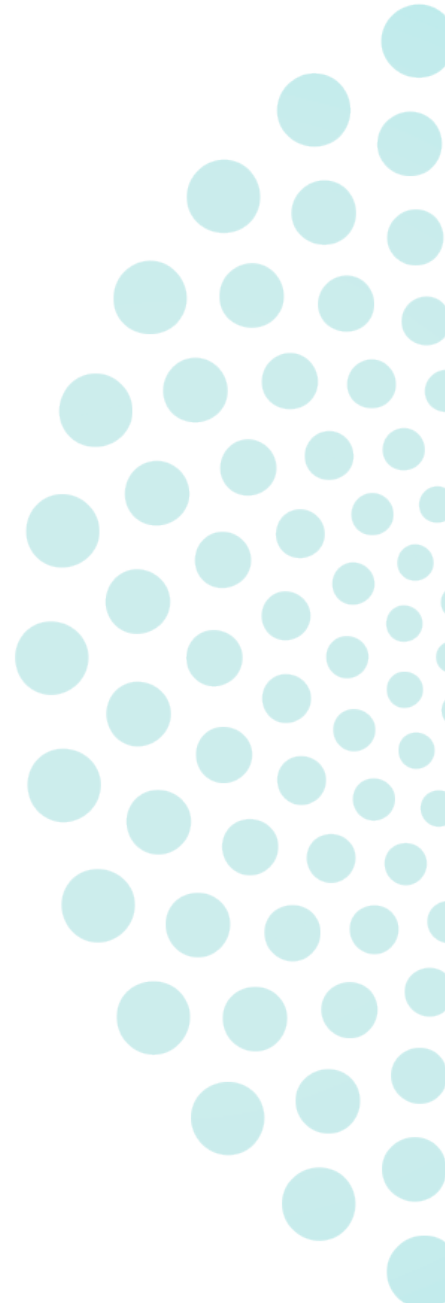
If suicidal thoughts are accompanied by illness such as depression, mental illness and alcohol abuse, this is a serious situation that needs immediate evaluation or intervention.

Also, when someone talks about their plans to suicide professional help is urgently required.

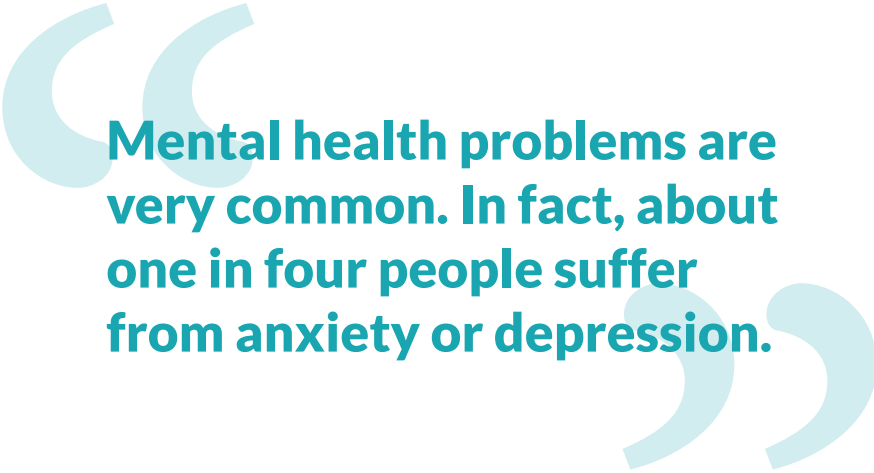
Feeling suicidal involves a feeling of mental pain that seems unbearable to the person.

The person becomes:

- preoccupied with their problems
- unable to see outside their situation
- unable to have a positive perspective on life
- overwhelmed with hopelessness
- focussed on their problems as having only one solution.







**Mental health problems are very common. In fact, about one in four people suffer from anxiety or depression.**

## WHAT IS MENTAL ILLNESS OR MENTAL DISORDER?

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The term mental illness or mental disorder describes symptoms a person experiences when their thinking, behaviour and emotional wellbeing is impaired. Mental illness can result from social, psychological, biochemical or organic causes. It can also stem from injuries to the brain.

There are two main categories of mental illness: psychosis and neurosis. Psychosis is when someone loses touch with reality.

They may have delusions (for example, thinking they have supernatural powers) or hallucinations where they see or hear things that aren't there (for example, seeing sharks swimming around the lounge room).

Bipolar disorder and schizophrenia are two serious types of mental illness that can lead to psychosis.

Neuroses are less severe mental disorders that include depression, anxiety, mild paranoia (for example, thinking people are speaking about you or following you) and obsessive compulsive disorders (for example,

constantly washing hands, hoarding things, cleaning).

Mental health problems are very common. In fact about one in four people will suffer from anxiety or depression. Everyone feels down, sad or moody at some stage of their life.

Feeling down can be caused by:

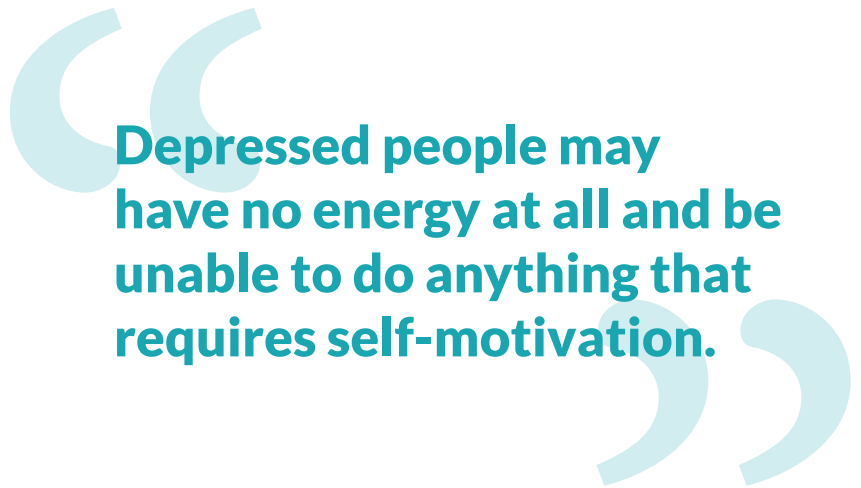
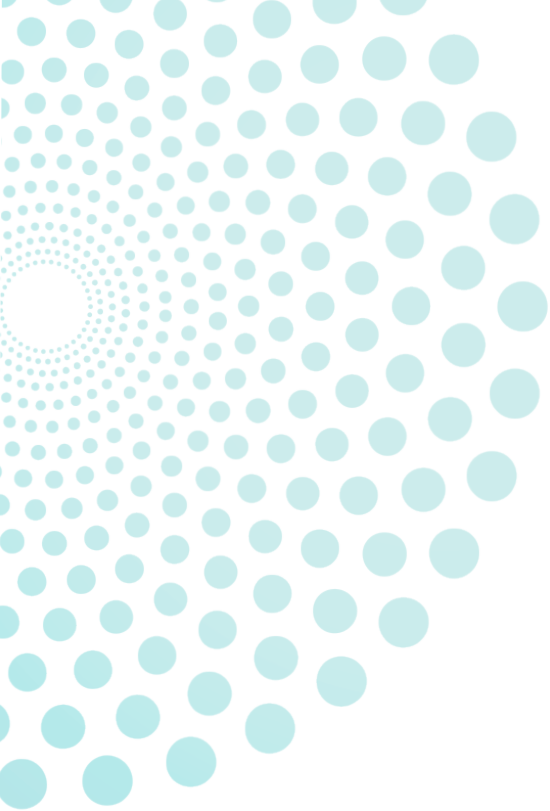
- death or chronic illness of a family member
- lack of finances
- shifts and changes in relationships
- moving away from family and loved ones
- losing a job
- health issues
- feeling stressed about work or home
- disappointment (for example, not getting a job, missing out on something you really wanted, losing a competition).

When someone feels down or sad it usually passes quickly and they go back to enjoying life and feeling hopeful about the future.

# ASSUMPTIONS AND FACTS

Take a look at some of the assumptions that people can feel about depression and suicidal thinking. Then read the facts to help you understand these mental health disorders.

ASSUMPTIONS	FACTS
'It's my fault I feel depressed and suicidal.'	Depression and suicidal thinking are disorders that require treatment like any other illness.
'If I suicide it won't really hurt anyone.'	Your death will affect all those who love you for a long period of time.
Once you are depressed you will always be that way.	Depression is an illness that can be treated allowing you to enjoy life again.
Depression isn't really an illness.	Depression is not just feeling a bit sad. The chemicals in your brain and body change and affect your thinking. It is an illness that, with treatment, can be controlled.
'If I just ignore it, it will go away.'	If someone has been feeling depressed for a long period of time they may need treatment to get well again.
'I will always feel like this.'	Suicidal thoughts and/or depressive thinking will pass. Just because you feel like that now it doesn't mean you will always feel this way.
If they just stopped drinking and taking drugs they wouldn't feel like that.	Drugs and alcohol abuse can sometimes trigger depression and suicidal thinking however it is also true that people suffering from depression and suicidal thinking are more at risk of abusing alcohol and drugs.
'I am bad or weak if I think about suicide.'	Feeling deeply depressed or having suicidal thoughts doesn't mean you are a weak or bad person. It means you are unwell and may need medical and emotional support to regain your health and wellbeing.
Anyone who says they are going to kill themselves is just being manipulative and wanting attention.	When someone is talking about suicide they are in a great deal of pain and looking for help.



**Depressed people may have no energy at all and be unable to do anything that requires self-motivation.**

## IMPACT OF DEPRESSION & SUICIDAL THINKING

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Depression can have a huge impact on the person experiencing it. Depression can involve long periods of low self-worth and changes in thinking.

It can result in the sufferer feeling that nothing gives them any sense of joy. Bursting into tears for no reason is another behaviour that can affect some sufferers.

Someone suffering from depression can lose all joy and happiness from food, exercise, work and hobbies. In fact, some people say they cannot even taste food. While some people may lose their appetite completely, others may begin to binge eat.

Many people who are in a depressed state lose their sexual drive and cannot show or feel physical affection. Sometimes individuals may experience mania (for example, excessively talking, unable to rest or sleep and/or a racing mind).

Depression can also impact on personal

hygiene. Individuals may not have the energy or self-worth to care about whether they have showered or groomed themselves.

Depressed people may have no energy at all and be unable to do anything that requires self-motivation. Often people report feeling overwhelming pain and a heavy weight in the chest.

The person suffering depression may realise that they are depressed and not coping but be unable to change their mood. The longer they remain in this state the more difficult it is for them to change without professional and medical support.

**Suicidal thoughts** can arise when someone is depressed. The person may talk about 'ending it all' or they may become totally withdrawn. They may feel pre-occupied with their problems and overwhelmed with hopelessness and think that suicide is the only option left.

# IMPACT ON FAMILY & FRIENDS

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Living with someone who is in a state of depression can be very difficult for those who love them. Often family members are unsure of:

- What the person's behaviour or feelings mean?
- What to say to be helpful?
- How to act?
- How and where to get help?

Families and friends may feel responsible and change their own behaviour thinking it will make the situation better.

It is important for family and friends to realise that their loved one is ill and they have not caused their loved one's disorder.

Family members may also feel:

- grief
- loss
- burdened
- confused
- lonely
- relieved
- that the relationship is one-sided where they are doing all the giving.


Because mental illness is sometimes seen as a taboo topic, friends who you imagined would be supportive may not want to be involved.

This can leave family members feeling alone and unsupported.

Looking after yourself is one of the best ways you can look after someone else.

Make sure you do things for yourself such as:

- getting a massage
- doing a relaxation class
- walking and exercising
- getting plenty of sleep and eating well
- having hobbies and activities that you enjoy
- meeting friends for coffee, a movie or a meal
- joining a support group and meeting people who understand what you are experiencing.



**Families and friends may feel responsible and change their own behaviour thinking it will make the situation better.**

# IF YOU FEEL DEPRESSED OR HAVE SUICIDAL THINKING

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If you are feeling suicidal make contact with someone to let them know you are feeling unwell.

Remember if the first person you tell is unable to offer help, talk to another loved one or friend.

Here are some ideas of what you do if you are feeling depressed or thinking of suicide.

- Tell someone how you are feeling.
- Call or go to a medical centre and tell them it is an emergency.
- Look in the front of the phone book for crisis help lines to contact.
- Ask someone to stay with you.
- Explain to friends and family how you feel.
- Try to separate negative thoughts and remind yourself that you didn't always feel like this.
- Write about how you feel and reflect on the things you value and enjoy.
- Stop taking drugs and alcohol.
- Do some physical exercise (for example, take a walk outside, go for a swim).
- Listen to music that you enjoy.

# THINGS TO SAY TO LET OTHERS KNOW YOU'RE UNWELL

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Reaching out to someone when you are unwell can make all the difference to your mental health.

You won't feel so alone and others can step in and help you to get the support you need. Even just sharing with others how you feel can be a load off your mind.

Use some of these sentences if you are not sure how to start to talk to others about how depressed and suicidal you feel.

- 'I'm having trouble seeing anything good in my life at the moment.'
- 'I think I need help. I feel really unhappy.'
- 'I'm feeling overwhelmed. I am depressed and can't see any light.'
- 'I don't feel I can go on. I have been thinking of ending my life.'
- 'I don't feel right. I feel really down and sad all the time.'
- 'Life doesn't seem worth living.'
- 'Each day things just get a bit worse.'

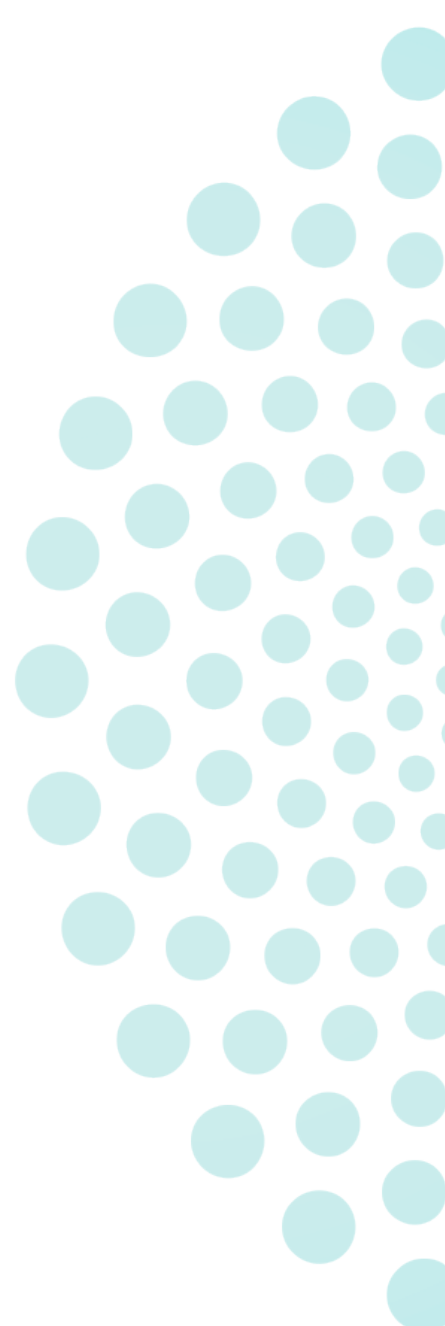
# SILENT MESSAGES

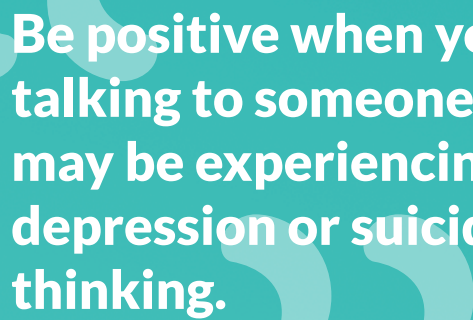
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Friends and family can often send silent messages to the person suffering depression by either ignoring the symptoms or suggesting it is 'all in their mind'.

Ignoring symptoms and/or suggesting the sufferer is to blame for their depression or suicidal thinking can make them feel:

- more isolated and alone
- as though no-one understands the anguish they feel
- like they are crazy
- like they have to hide and withdraw from everyone
- that they are unworthy of help
- as though there is no help available
- like no-one believes how bad they are feeling.





**Be positive when you're talking to someone that may be experiencing depression or suicidal thinking.**

## SUPPORTING SOMEONE SUFFERING FROM DEPRESSION & SUICIDAL THINKING

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Sometimes people are not even aware of how depressed and/or suicidal their thinking has become.

How you respond can really make a difference to someone who is depressed or suicidal. Your support could help someone.

Supporting someone who is suffering from depression or suicidal thoughts can help them:

- recognise that they are unwell
- seek professional help to address how they are feeling
- feel that loved ones and friends care and understand
- realise they are not alone
- recognise that they didn't always feel this way
- get the support and help they need to get well again
- acknowledge the way they are feeling.

# ACTIONS TO SUPPORT SOMEONE WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

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How you respond to a person who is showing signs of being emotionally or mentally unwell could save their life. Be relaxed and calm.

Make sure that you are able to follow through with whatever support you offer.

Here are some ideas of how to be supportive to someone who is depressed and suicidal:

- If you feel they are in immediate danger of taking their own life call for medical support.
- Avoid saying things such as 'Just snap out of it', 'All you need to do is get out there and get on with it'.
- If you think they are suicidal stay with the person.
- Provide the person with information on services they could access.
- Let them know you are there for them and listen without judging.
- Help the person make an appointment to get help.
- Suggest you do some exercise with the person.
- Get support for yourself from health professionals or counselling services.
- Encourage them to get enough sleep and to eat well.
- Encourage other family members to be supportive.
- Discourage them from drinking alcohol or taking drugs.
- When the person is well, make an agreement about what to do when they are unwell (for example, agree that you will call the hospital).

## THINGS YOU COULD SAY

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Be positive when you are talking to someone who may be experiencing depression or suicidal thinking. A

Also be calm but direct. These sentences can give you some starting points to talk to friends or family members who are experiencing mental health issues.

- 'I am really worried about you. You seem to be really unhappy.'
- 'Is everything okay? You look overwhelmed by things.'
- 'I notice you seem a bit down. I am here if you want to talk'
- 'You don't seem to be sleeping well. Is everything okay?'
- 'I've noticed you're not seeing your friends.'
- 'Remember we talked about what we would do if you began to think about suicide.'
- 'How can I help you?'
- 'You keep talking about your life as not worth living. I, your dad and your brothers and sisters love you very much.'

Depression can have a huge impact on the person experiencing it. Someone suffering from Depression can lose all joy and happiness.



Community groups empowering community

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