

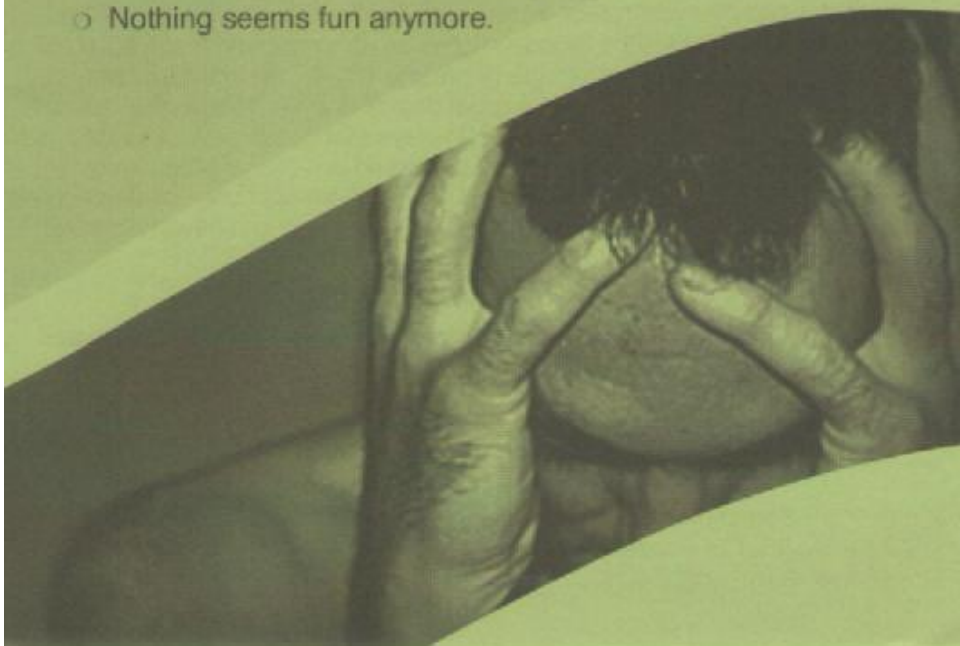


natasha goulbourn foundation

BRINGING
DEPRESSION
TO LIGHT

Are you feeling sad, tired and worried most of the time?
Are these feelings lasting more than a few days?
If your answer is yes, you may have **depression**
If you are depressed, one of these situations may
be happening to you:

- You know you have to keep going because of your job and your responsibilities but it just feel so impossible.
- Getting out of bed in the morning is really hard for you.
- You don't feel much like eating and have lost a lot of weight.
- You are always tired and don't sleep well at night.
- You don't seem to want to talk to anyone.
- Nothing seems fun anymore.



What is depression?

Depression (depressive disorder) is an illness that involves the body, mood and thoughts. It affects the way a person eats and sleeps, the way one feels about oneself, and the way one thinks about things. A depressive disorder is not the same as a passing blue mood. It is not a sign of personal weakness or a condition that can be willed or wished away. People with a depressive illness cannot merely "put themselves together" and get better. Without treatment, symptoms can last for weeks, months or years. Appropriate treatment, however, can help most people who suffer from depression. Depression is an illness but it can be prevented and treated.

Types of depression

Depressive disorders come in different forms, just as is the case with other illnesses such as heart disease. This pamphlet briefly describes three of the most common types of depressive disorders. However, within these types there are variations in the number of symptoms, their severity and persistence.

Major depression is manifested by a combination of symptoms that interfere with the ability to work, study, sleep, eat and enjoy once pleasurable activities. Such a disabling episode of depression may occur only once but more commonly occurs several times in a lifetime.

A less severe type of depression, **dysthymia**, involves long-term, chronic symptoms that do not disable, but keep one from functioning well or from feeling good. Many people with dysthymia also experience major depressive episodes at some time in their lives.

Another type of depression is **bipolar disorder** or manic-depressive illness. Not nearly as prevalent as other forms of depressive disorder, bipolar disorder is characterized by cycling mood changes, severe highs (mania) and lows (depression). Sometimes the mood switches are dramatic and rapid, but most often they are gradual. When in the depression cycle, an individual may be overactive, over talkative and have a great deal of energy. Mania often affects thinking, judgement and social behavior in ways that cause serious problems and embarrassment. For example, the individual in a manic phase may feel elated, full of grand schemes that might range from unwise business decisions to romantic sprees. Mania, left untreated, may worsen to a psychotic state.

What causes depression?

You may want to know why you feel "depressed". There may be several causes.

- Depression may happen because of changes in your brain.
- Depression runs in some families. This means that someone in your family such as a grandparent, parent, aunt, uncle, cousin, sister or brother may have depression.
- Sometimes painful events or losses such as deaths can lead to depression.
- Sometimes the cause of depression is not clear.

Four steps to understanding and get help for depression:

1 STEP 1: Look for signs of depression

Read the following and put a check mark by each sign that sound like you.

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am really sad most of the time. | <input type="checkbox"/> I have little or no sexual energy. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't enjoy doing the things I've always enjoyed doing. | <input type="checkbox"/> I find it hard to focus and am very forgetful. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't sleep well at night and am very restless. | <input type="checkbox"/> I get mad at everybody and everything. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am always tired. I find it hard to get out of bed. | <input type="checkbox"/> I feel upset and fearful but can't figure out why. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't feel like eating much. | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't feel like talking to people. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I feel like eating all the time. | <input type="checkbox"/> There isn't much point to living, nothing good will happen to me. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have a lot of aches and pains that don't go away. | <input type="checkbox"/> I think about death a lot. I even think of killing myself. |

If you checked several boxes, call your doctor. Take the list and show the doctor. You may need to get a check-up and find out if you have depression.

2 STEP 2: Understand depression is a real illness

Depression is a serious medical illness that involves the brain.

Depression is not something that you have "made up in your head", it's more than feeling "down in the dumps" or "blue" for a few days. It's feeling "down" and "low" and hopeless for weeks at a time.

It can happen to anyone, no matter what age you are or where you come from. One out of every five individuals will eventually experience a major depressive episode during their lifetime.

In 2004, the Philippines had 4,570,810 reported cases of depression. It is highly probable that as many as three times this number of cases remain unreported in the country.

3 STEP 3: See your doctor or other health provider

Don't wait. Talk to your doctor about how you are feeling.

Get a medical checkup to rule out any other illness that might be causing signs of depression. Ask if you need to see someone who can evaluate and treat depression.

If you don't have a doctor, check your local phone book. You may also call the DOH services pages and look for "health clinic" or "community health center" nearest you. Call this and ask for help.

4 STEP 4: Get treatment for your depression

There are two common types of treatment for depression MEDICINE and "TALK THERAPY". Ask your doctor which type is best for you. Some people need both treatments to feel better.

Medicine for depression is called "anti-depressants". Only your regular doctor or a psychiatrist (a medical doctor trained in helping people with depression) can prescribe them to you.

Anti-depressants may take a few weeks to work. Be sure to tell the doctor how you are feeling. If you are not feeling better, he may need to try a different medicine to find out what works best for you.

Medicine sometimes cause unwanted "side effects". You may feel tired, have blurred vision, or feel sick to your stomach. Tell the doctor if you have these or any other side effect and ascertain that he/she monitors your progress and the drug's impact on your body with strict regularity including obtaining periodic laboratory levels of the drug in your body (i.e. blood titers), if the drug warrants such precaution.

Note: anti-depressant drugs are controversial for various reasons, including studies showing that in some cases, herbal cures such as St. John's Wort or even placebo sugar pills work just as well. You may visit your practitioners of alternative medicine for treatment but must exercise the best judgement in deciding to do this, preferably after consulting your doctor or psychiatrist.

“Talk” Therapy

“Talk” Therapy involves talking to a trained professional such as a psychiatrist, doctor, psychologist, social worker or counselor - or even a caring friend or relative. This helps you learn to change how depression makes you think, feel and act. Ask your doctor or psychiatrist whom you should go to for “talk” therapy.

If you know someone who seems depressed and may need help, here are some things you can do:

- Tell the person that you are concerned about him or her.
- Share this booklet with that person.
- Talk to the person about seeing a doctor.
- Take the person to see the doctor.
- If the doctor offers the name and phone number of a psychiatrist or someone for “talk” therapy, call the number and help the person make an appointment.
- Take the person to the appointment. “Be there” for the person after he or she starts treatment.
- Contact any of the places listed under “For more information” in this booklet.

Suicide is not an option

Sometimes depression can cause people to feel like killing themselves.

If you are thinking about killing yourself or know someone who is talking about it, get help:

- Call for help from a friend or relative.
- Go to the emergency room of the nearest hospital.
- Call and talk to your health provider immediately.
- Ask a friend or family members to take you to the hospital or call your doctor.

You can feel better

Things to remember:

Depression is not only treatable, it is also preventable. While depression can make it very hard for you to care for yourself, your family, or even hold down a job, there is hope.

Depression can be treated and you can feel better.

For more information:

Natasha Goulbourn Foundation

Suite 209, LRI Design Plaza, 210 Nicanor Garcia Street
Makati City, Metro Manila, Philippines 1209
Telefax: (632) 697-2217
Website: www.natashagoulbournfoundation.org
E-mail: ngfoundation@gmail.com
info@natashagoulbournfoundation.org

CALL OUR AFFILIATES which offer
CRISIS LINE services
IN TOUCH 893-7603/ 893-7605
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