

Help for Depression

Everybody feels down from time to time. That is entirely normal. Depression is something different in quality and severity. The mental disorder called depression or sometimes clinical depression occurs when feelings of sadness or despair endure for long periods of time. These can last for several weeks to several years if left untreated. Depression can interfere with a person's ability to function effectively throughout the day or even to have the motivation to get out of bed in the morning.

Depression is a common and serious mental health problem. In Canada and the United States over 1 in 5 people will likely get some form of depression in their lifetime. Women are almost twice as likely as men to experience a depressive episode throughout their lives.

For some people Depression seems to begin following some stressful life event. The stressful event may have contributed to the onset, but it did not cause the depression. We now know that family history and genetics play a part in the greater likelihood of someone becoming depressed in their lifetime. Increased stress and inadequate coping mechanisms to deal with that stress may also contribute to depression. We know that there are biological and psychological components to every depression, it is not a purely biochemical or medical disorder.

When people talk about having depression they are typically referring to what is known as Major Depression. Less common forms of depression, but still just as disruptive to a person's overall functioning, are the depressions related to Bipolar Disorder and Seasonal Affective Disorder. Bipolar Disorder, or what was commonly known as manic-depression, involves cyclical periods of severe depression with periods of extremely elevated or irritable mood known as mania. Bipolar depression is treatable and should involve your physician. Seasonal Affective Disorder refers to depression that has a seasonal pattern usually in the fall or winter months when the days are shorter and there is less exposure to natural sunlight.

One of the tragedies of depression is that it is one of the most treatable of the mental illnesses, yet many people never seek out and receive help. That means needless suffering and the person themselves and their loved ones. Further, an untreated episode of depression tends to make another episode of depression later in life more likely. On the other hand, solid treatment of depression tends to protect a person from subsequent depressive episodes. Therefore, seek help when depression is starting to affect your life. Don't wait until life is unbearable for yourself and your loved ones.

Fortunately, there are many highly effective treatments for depression today that alleviate much of the suffering associated with depressive symptoms. Counselling and antidepressant medications are the two most commonly used treatments for managing depression. Some people prefer a combination of the two. Each person responds uniquely, of course, but these approaches have shown good promise for providing relief.

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Anti-depressants are often valuable for helping to make life bearable, so that a person can participate in counselling. Talk to your doctor or psychiatrist to find out if the use of anti-depressants is right for you. A Christian counsellor can also help you with this decision.

Counselling is generally as effective as medication, and in some ways is even superior (though not quite as fast acting). For example, people who receive therapy tend to have a lower relapse (recurrence) rate, and tend to feel like an active participant in the recovery process. Christian Counselling can help the person with depression and those who are in close relationship with them. Effective and common types of Christian counselling are called cognitive therapy (identifying and correcting distorted thinking), behavior therapy (identifying and correcting responses to life that may be problematic), and interpersonal therapy (teaching improved relationship skills). All of these are short-term therapies, and all focus on changing things in the present.

Ready to talk? Russell Counselling can help you move ahead with your goals for growth and healing. Call us toll free at 1 866 433 5666 for a free brief consultation or counsellor@russellcounselling.com.

The resources on this site are provided for informational purposes only and should not be used to replace the specialized training and professional judgment of a health care or mental health care professional.

Russell Counselling cannot be held responsible for the use of the information provided. Please always consult a trained mental health professional before making any decision regarding treatment of yourself or others.

Self-help information and information from the Internet is useful, but it is not a substitute for professional assistance. Please seek professional help:

- *if you have thoughts of killing (or otherwise harming) yourself or others;*
- *if you are gravely disabled (unable to care for yourself);*
- *if you are abusing substances;*
- *or if you or someone else is in any danger of harm.*

If you are in need of help, please contact a Crisis Clinic or a qualified mental health care provider.