



Depression – what is it and how do I get it?

One in ten of us will suffer from depression during our lives. Some of us will get just a single episode, others will find it returns again and again.

Severe depression may even cause us to think about committing suicide. If you have suicidal thoughts please see the back of this leaflet for suggestions.

Depression is an illness. It can begin after a traumatic event; or significant loss; or as a result of too much stress either at home or at work. Some illnesses can also make us depressed, especially if we have to change to our way of living as a result.

Major life events (e.g. giving birth or divorce) can also make us depressed.

Using drugs such as cannabis or cocaine can make us depressed.

Some people may have inherited a genetic predisposition towards depression.

What Help is Available?

You can contact me by email to discuss how we might work together (gill@gjcounselling.co.uk). I'm happy to discuss how you feel and to offer you suggestions about managing your depression. I will also support you whilst you try out ways to manage your depression more successfully.

If you feel depressed it is sensible to have a check-up with your doctor, to see there is no underlying physical cause. If your GP suggests antidepressant medication to manage your symptoms, these will give you relief from the symptoms which enables you to re-engage with your life and work but it may take several tries before you discover the right ones for you. Many GPs suggest depressed patients take a course of counselling (talking therapy) as well as antidepressants for best results.

Talking to a counsellor (whether you are taking antidepressants or not) will make you more aware of how to manage your symptoms, teach you to notice and challenge negative thoughts and patterns of behaviour and help you to make a plan for managing by yourself in the future.

If you're feeling suicidal you can contact the Samaritans for immediate support (telephone 08457 909090 or email jo@samaritans.org).

If you think you are depressed you can check out your symptoms on an interactive website which will give you an idea of the level of depression you have.

<http://moodgym.anu.edu.au/welcome>

Gill Jones Information Leaflet - Depression





MANAGING DEPRESSION

Understanding yourself

When you are depressed some or all of these symptoms take over your thinking space, making it difficult to concentrate.

Feeling withdrawn, separate, isolated from friends, colleagues, family (no-one can understand how you feel)

Have difficulty making decisions.

Feeling low, worthless, a failure.

Feeling things will never get better.

Feeling guilty about letting people down.

Feeling tired and listless, any activity is too much trouble.

No interest in sex.

Not sleeping well.

Not eating with any enjoyment or pleasure.

Not feeling any pleasure in life, work, family, projects.

Feeling hopeless about the future.

Finding a way through your Depression – Talking Can Help

When you're depressed you can feel cut-off and withdrawn from your friends and family. It feels like you're the only person who understands how you are feeling – like walking down a long, dark, road, with no travelling companions.

Talking to a professional counsellor can offer you support and help you to find a road which leads out of depression.

Sharing your thoughts and feelings with someone else who is not part of your family or friendship circle does help. Discussing things with a counsellor who undertakes to keep what you say confidential, frees you to say things you don't want friends or family to know. People find talking helps them to stand back and view things from a safer distance. Depression can build because you are bottling things up which you can't say to those nearest to you.

Self Help – What Can You Do?

Don't push people away because everything seems so bad – even though you want to be on your own.

Try to start the day with a brisk walk – it gets you out of bed and your body working.

Exercise helps you to feel better by releasing endorphins (feel good juices) which help raise your body's serotonin levels.

Eat healthily and regularly (plenty of oily fish and protein-rich foods (except cheese) to assist the production of serotonin.

Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and sugar. Keep blood sugar levels up and avoid a 'sugar low' by not eating foods like cakes and biscuits. Eating regularly also helps you maintain your blood sugar levels.

Don't use illegal drugs, they can cause depression.

Don't shut yourself away. Talk to someone, or phone them. Try to be with other people every day – don't sit at home alone.

Write down 3 positive things you have noticed each day (sunshine, favourite song on radio, etc.)