



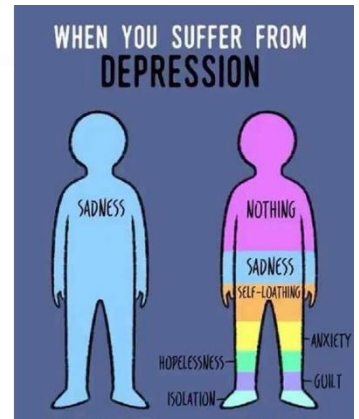
PERTH PSYCHOLOGISTS

What is Depression?

Depression is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness. Depression is more than just a bout of the blues, it isn't a weakness and you can't simply "snap out" of it. It affects how you feel, think and behave and can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems.

For many people with depression, symptoms are usually severe enough to cause noticeable problems in normal day-to-day activities, such as work, school, social activities or relationships. Some people feel generally miserable or unhappy without really knowing why.

Depression is a serious condition which often gets worse if untreated, resulting in emotional, behavioural and health problems that affect every area of your life.



Symptoms of Depression

- Feelings of sadness, tearfulness, emptiness or hopelessness.
- Angry outbursts, irritability or frustration, even over small matters.
- Loss of interest or pleasure in most or all normal activities.
- Sleep disturbances, eg. insomnia or sleeping too much.
- Tiredness and lack of energy, small tasks take extra effort
- Reduced appetite and weight loss or increased cravings for food and weight gain.
- Anxiety, agitation or restlessness.
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt, fixating on past failures or self-blame.
- Trouble thinking, concentrating, making decisions and remembering things.
- Frequent or recurrent thoughts of death, suicidal thoughts.
- Unexplained physical problems eg. back pain or headaches.

Causes and Contributing Factors to Depression

- **Brain and Brain Chemistry.** People with depression appear to have physical and chemical changes in their brains. Changes in the function and effect of how naturally occurring brain chemicals (neurotransmitters) interact with the neurocircuits involved in maintaining mood stability likely play a role in depression and its treatment.
- **Hormones.** Changes in the body's balance of hormones.
- **Personality traits.** Personality traits such as low self-esteem and being too dependent, self-critical or pessimistic.
- **Trauma and Stress.** Traumatic or stressful events, eg. physical or sexual abuse, death or loss, or a difficult relationship.
- **Family History.** Relatives with a history of depression, bipolar disorder, alcoholism or suicide.
- **Mental Health History.** A history of other mental health disorders, eg. anxiety, eating or post-traumatic stress disorders.
- **Substance Abuse.** Abuse of alcohol or recreational drugs.
- **Illness.** Serious or chronic illness, eg. cancer, stroke, chronic pain or heart disease.
- **Medications.** Certain medications, eg. some high blood pressure medications or sleeping pills.

How do we treat Depression?

Research has shown that the addition of psychological counselling to medication provides the most effective and enduring treatment option for a diagnosis of depression or anxiety. This combined approach, as part of a treatment plan, addresses the beliefs and behaviours underlying depression and aims to return an individual to a place of ongoing well-being and quality of life. Although depression may occur only once during your life, people may also have multiple episodes, therefore an ongoing treatment plan including ongoing psychological counselling is a proven method of treatment to build robustness and prevent relapse.