

## What is Depression?

Everyone has ups and downs and an occasional bout of the blues. Depression, however, is a persistent condition that affects how you feel, think, and behave. As a serious mental illness, it can negatively impact your physical health and appearance, academic performance, social

activity, spiritual well-being, and ability to handle everyday pressures and decisions.

Contrary to common misbelief, those struggling with

depression cannot simply “snap out of it.” Consistent treatment, including medication and/or counseling, often helps, if not eliminates, depression’s symptoms.

### DEPRESSION WARNING SIGNS

- A persistent sad, anxious, or “empty” mood
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism
- Feelings of guilt or worthlessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities that were once enjoyed
- Decreased energy, fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Insomnia or oversleeping
- Change in appetite and/or weight
- Thoughts of death or suicide; suicide attempts
- Restlessness, irritability
- Persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment, including headaches, digestive disorders, and chronic pain

An estimated 1 in 10 American adults suffer from depression.

—Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

## Additional Resources

### Books:

*Coping with Depression: The Common Cold of the Emotional Life*

by John Ortberg and Siang-Yang Tan

*I Don't Want to Talk About It: Overcoming the Secret Legacy of Male Depression*

by Terrence Real

*Night Falls Fast: Understanding Suicide*

by Kay Redfield Jamison

*The Cognitive Behavioral Workbook for Depression*

by William Knaus and Albert Ellis

## Related Scriptures

God will give you strength.

Isaiah 40:29-31 & 41:10; Psalm 18:1-19

God will give you peace.

John 14:27 & 16:33

God's presence is with you.

Joshua 1:9

God will not abandon you.

Psalm 23, John 14:18

God forgives you.

1 John 1:9

God protects you in trials.

Job 23:10

God gives you hope.

Psalm 42 & 62:5-8



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# Depression



## A Quick Reference Guide

Provided by the  
Office of Student Life

**BETHEL**  
UNIVERSITY

## How to Help a Friend

- Encourage him or her to seek specialized medical and psychological help, especially if he or she has mentioned death or suicide (see On- and Off-Campus Support).
- Help your friend make an appointment and/or accompany him or her to the counseling or doctor's appointment.
- Encourage your friend to stay with treatment (counseling sessions, taking medications, making recommended lifestyle changes) until symptoms begin to abate (several weeks), or to seek different treatment if no improvement occurs.
- Offer emotional support by giving understanding, patience, affection, and encouragement.
- Engage your friend in conversation; listen carefully.
- Invite your friend to go for a walk, see a movie, attend a sports game, or out for another social activity. Be gentle yet persistent.
- Encourage participation in activities you know your friend once liked—hobbies, sports, church activities, etc.—but do not push your friend to undertake too much too soon.
- **Do not** ignore remarks about suicide. If your friend is not seeing a counselor or therapist, report the suicidal remarks to an adult you trust. The staff in Counseling Services, Student Life, Campus Ministries, and Residence Life are available to help.
- **Do not** suggest that he or she is sinful or unspiritual for experiencing depression, anxiety, or anger.
- **Do not** criticize. Those suffering from depression are often overly critical of themselves already.
- **Do not** accuse him or her of laziness or faking illness and do not expect him or her to “snap out of it.”



## How to Take Care of Yourself

- Set realistic goals and assume a reasonable amount of responsibility. Consider lightening your course load or co-curricular involvement.
- Break large tasks into small ones and take things one step (or day) at a time.
- Try to be with other people and confide in one or two people you trust; avoid being alone or secretive.
- Expect your mood to improve gradually, not immediately.
- Consider postponing important decisions until the depression has lifted. Before deciding to make a major transition—dropping out of school, severing significant relational ties, etc.—discuss it with others who know you well and have a more objective view of your situation.
- Let family and friends help you.
- Many churches have lay counseling/caring ministries or specialized ministries through small groups relating to depression. Ask if these are available at the church you attend and get involved.
- Take care of your body by:
  - Eating a well-balanced diet—even if you don't feel like eating!
  - Establishing a regular exercise routine—30 minutes of aerobic exercise three times a week is sufficient.
  - Getting adequate amounts of rest—seven to eight hours of sleep is recommended, and try to go to sleep and wake up at the same times each day.
- Listen to comforting, inspirational music or worship music, which can help remind you of God's goodness and lift your spirits.
- Meditate on Scriptures (see Related Scriptures). They may not supernaturally make your depression disappear, but they can bring comfort.

## What if These Suggestions Don't Work?

If you are experiencing depressive episodes frequently (daily to several times a week) and/or they're lasting for weeks at a time, consider seeking specialized help. Consult a medical professional immediately if you're having serious thoughts about ending your life. The Office of Student Life (ext. 6300) and/or Counseling Services (ext. 8540) can put you in touch with specialized help on or off campus. Individual counseling is available on campus and support is available through staff in Student Life, Campus Ministries, and Residence Life. If you need immediate assistance, please call the Office of Security and Safety at ext. 6055 (available 24 hours).

## On- and Off-Campus Support

### On Campus

Office of Student Life: available to talk and pray with you as well as suggest options for further care; stop by or call for an appointment (BC252; ext. 6300)

Counseling Services: offers free support for students with depression and other emotional health needs (Townhouse H1; ext. 8540)

Office of Campus Ministries: provides spiritual support and mentoring (HC325; ext. 6372)

Health Services: provides medical assistance and referrals for information and care (Townhouse H1; ext. 6215)

### Off Campus

Arden Woods Psychological Services  
(New Brighton): 651.482.9361

Midwest Center for Trauma and Emotional Healing  
(Minnetonka): 952.934.2555

Minnesota Renewal Center  
(Arden Hills): 651.486.4828