



DEPRESSION? ANXIETY?

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How often in a day do you hear the media, family, colleagues or friends talk about feelings of 'depression' or 'anxiety'? Sometimes we hear these words, or even use these words, but we may not know their true meaning, or what to do if we experience them.

Following is some information about depression and anxiety, and some useful tips on what to do if you think you're experiencing them.

Depression

Feeling sad, down, or lonely for a short period of time is a normal part of life – especially if we have experienced something difficult. However, sometimes we can feel miserable, unmotivated, and isolated (or even worse) for long periods of time, which can affect our mental and physical well-being.

What causes it?

Some people experience depression after difficulties that happened years ago, others after the accumulation of years of challenging events, some after a single traumatic event, and yet for others depression can seem to come from nowhere.

Depression is often a mix of things, such as: genetics, life circumstances, personality, trauma exposure, and/or substance use.

What is it?

If, for more than two weeks, you've felt sad or down, or you've lost interest or pleasure in activities that you normally enjoy, and you've experienced several of the symptoms below, you may be experiencing depression.

Thoughts such as "I'm a failure", "It's my fault", "Nothing ever good happens to me", "I'm worthless", "Life's not worth living".

Feelings can include sadness, overwhelm, guilt, irritability, frustration, anger, low self-esteem, disappointment or indecisiveness.

Behaviours may involve not going out anymore, not getting things done, withdrawing from family and friends, not engaging in usual enjoyable activities, being unable to concentrate, or relying on alcohol or drugs.

Physically you may feel tired all the time, be sick and run down, have headaches and muscle pains, your sleep may be disturbed, or your appetite may change.

Anxiety

We often feel stressed or anxious when we're in a difficult situation, and for most of us these feelings subside after we've left the situation. However, anxiety that is constant, may be present for no particular reason, and that prevents us from doing things can have a big impact on how we cope in daily life.

What causes it?

Similar to depression, it's often a combination of things. Genetics, ongoing stressful events, personality, physical health problems, trauma exposure, and/or substance use can all contribute to feelings of anxiety.

What is it?

Sometimes people experience anxiety all the time, yet for others it is only when confronted with a specific object or situation (such as flying, public speaking, or even fearing losing those we love).

Thoughts can include "What if ...", "Something bad will happen", "I'll die", "People will think I'm silly", "People will laugh at me".

Feelings can include worry and being unable to stop worrying, irritability, restlessness, edginess, or even feeling detached from yourself and your surroundings.

Behaviours may involve avoiding people or situations, not engaging in enjoyable activities, finding it difficult to concentrate, or doing the same activity repeatedly/precisely/the same to avoid something bad happening or to feel less anxious.

Physically you may have hot and cold flushes, sweaty palms, a racing heart, a tightening in your chest, muscle pain or headaches, dizziness, shortness of breath, nauseous, numbness, or disturbances in your appetite and sleep.

What Can You Do?

The experience of occasional sadness, loneliness, stress or anxiety often goes away by itself; or can be managed by keeping a routine, having people you can talk to, using relaxation strategies, and sleeping, eating and exercising well.

It's Okay To Seek Help

If you think you may have depression or anxiety, and it's having a negative impact on your life, seeking professional assistance could be useful.

How Can A Psychologist Help?

Psychologists use a range of effective techniques and therapies to assist people in resolving depression and anxiety. Speak with your G.P. if you think you could benefit from seeing a psychologist.

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and
anxiety