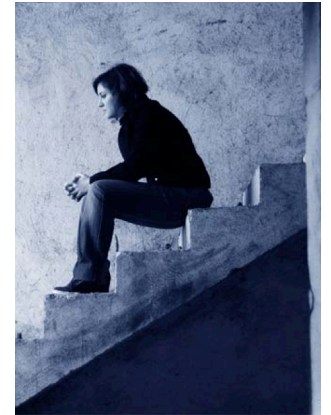


Dealing with Depression: What Everyone Should Know

When a relationship ends, you learn that your parents are separating, or you experience the death of a loved one, life can seem pretty bad. Or you may start feeling blue living away from home for the first time. And struggling to master difficult courses can leave you feeling down.



Feeling down is common among college students who are living on their own for the first time, developing new relationships, exploring new identities, and challenging old ideas. In most cases, time and self-help are the best treatments for bouts of low self-esteem and occasional feelings of being sad, overwhelmed, and “just not up to the challenge.” For others with more prolonged or more severe depressive feelings, further evaluation and medical treatment may be needed. Either way, it is important to acknowledge your feelings and take some action.

What Causes Depression?

The exact cause of depression is unknown; it is likely a combination of biological (chemistry or hormonal changes), genetic (family predisposition for depression), and psychological (life stressors) factors. Other factors to consider include:

- Difficulty coping with life events
- Changes in your life – both positive and negative
- Gender-related hormonal changes
- Brain injury
- Medication side effects
- Health conditions
- Chronic pain
- Substance abuse
- Relationship problems and concerns
- Death of a loved one
- Divorce or separation
- Academic or job difficulty
- Unrealistic standards
- Traumatic events

In many cases it is difficult to determine a single cause for depression and often there are multiple causes that contribute to the condition.

See also Back from the Blue: Coping with Depression at http://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/resources/infopax.cfm?Info_ID=37

Excerpted from Dealing with Depression: What Everyone Should Know (American College Health Association)

Why Seek Help?

Depression is treatable, and things will get better. However, without treatment, depression can get worse, reoccur, make life more difficult, interfere with academics, or create other health issues, such as substance abuse, anxiety, and an inability to manage anger. Many people don't get treatment because they don't realize they're depressed, they blame the depression on personal weakness, or they're so depressed that they can't reach out for help. They may think, “What's the point – I'm hopeless,” or “I should take care of my problems alone,” or they may have simply forgotten what it feels like to not be depressed.

Masking Depression

Sometimes an individual's behavior can signify an underlying depression more than feelings can. Get professional help if you are

- Having difficulties with alcohol, other drugs, tobacco, or food
- Practicing unsafe sex or “sex with regrets”
- Driving recklessly
- Vandalizing property or stealing
- Behaving in ways that you believe – or your friends tell you – are destructive