

Yellow
Brick
Road



Lifting the dark cloud

A guide to understanding
and healing depression

Are you concerned a loved one may be feeling depressed?

Are you worried about how to discuss this and raise your concerns? Perhaps you think a whānau member may need more support.

Depression can leave those it affects, including family, feeling very isolated and unsupported.

But it doesn't have to be that way.

We're here to help you and your loved ones get the mental health support they need.



What is depression?

Depression is a persistent state of sadness and hopelessness. It can be a constant low mood, accompanied by a loss of interest in once enjoyable activities.

Sometimes there's no reason for the feelings that arise and people don't know why they are down, sad or depressed. They just are.

It's important to remember depression isn't the fault of the person who is depressed.

Depression is often linked with anxiety. It is worth reading the anxiety pamphlet in this series to see if it helps you.

How do you recognise depression?

Someone who is depressed can find thinking about things very hard and that their mind seems unable to rest and recover.

They may feel:

- Extremely unmotivated and/or lacking in energy to complete tasks
- Numb or emotionless
- Restless or unable to sit still
- Unable to concentrate on any one thing
- Moody, easily annoyed
- Hopeless or constantly overwhelmed
- Like they just want to be left alone
- Nervous, anxious, on edge
- Afraid something awful might happen

They might be thinking:

- Negatively about everything
- They're a failure
- They can't cope or get through tasks like they could before.
- They don't care about the people and things that usually matter to them.

How is depression different from sadness?

Depression is more than just sadness, and the difference doesn't lie in the extent to which someone feels down.

The difference is a combination of how long the negative feelings last, the impact on their body, and the effect upon how they function in daily life.

1. Depression doesn't need a trigger to occur

Sadness is a normal emotion that everyone experiences at some point in their life. It is usually caused by a specific situation, person or event; such as a relationship ending, a bereavement, isolation or a job loss.

When it comes to depression, however, no such trigger is needed.

A person suffering from depression feels sad or hopeless about everything. They may have every reason in the world to be happy but they lose the ability to experience joy or pleasure.

2. Depression takes away all interest and pleasure

With sadness, you might feel down in the dumps for a day or two, but you're still able to enjoy simple things like your favourite TV show, food, or spending time with friends.

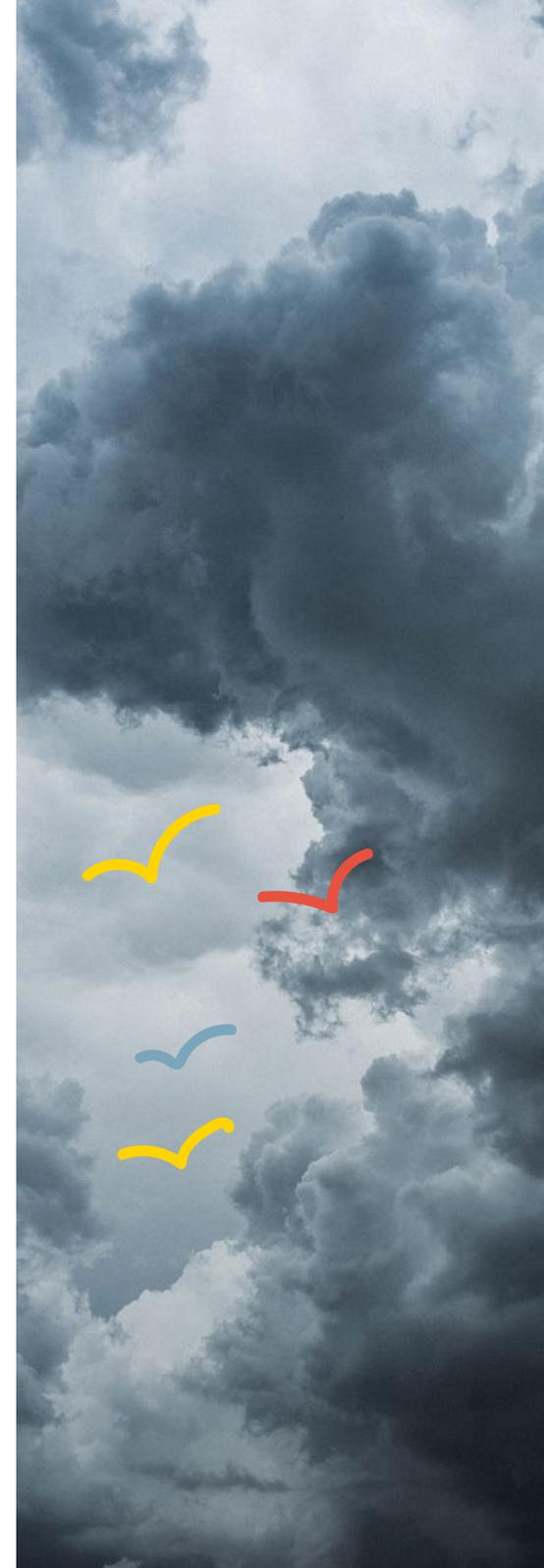
This isn't the case when someone is dealing with depression.

Even activities that a depressed person once enjoyed are no longer interesting or pleasurable.

3. Depression disrupts eating and sleeping patterns

When you experience sadness you're still able to sleep as you usually would, remain motivated to do things, and maintain your desire to eat.

Depression, on the other hand, is associated with serious disruption of normal eating and sleeping patterns, as well as not wanting to get out of bed all day.



There are different types of depression

1. Major depression (Clinical depression)

2. Dysthymia (Persistent depressive disorder)

Dysthymia is a long-term depression that lasts for years and can interfere with daily life, work, and relationships.

People experiencing dysthymia may be perceived as gloomy, pessimistic, or a complainer, when in reality they are dealing with a chronic mental illness.

Signs and symptoms include:

- Difficulty being happy, even on typically joyous occasions
- Symptoms that come and go over time, with changing intensity
- Symptoms that generally don't disappear for more than two months at a time

3. Postpartum depression (Peripartum depression)

Sad feelings and crying bouts that follow childbirth are known as the "baby blues". The baby blues are common, attributed to hormonal changes, and tend to decrease within a week or two.

Around 1 in 7 women will struggle with sadness, anxiety or worry that lasts more than several weeks. They may have postpartum depression (PPD).

Signs and symptoms include:

- Feeling down or depressed for most of the day for several weeks or more
- Feeling distant and withdrawn from family and friends
- A loss of interest in activities (including sex)
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits
- Feeling tired most of the day
- Feeling angry or irritable
- Having feelings of anxiety, worry, panic attacks or racing thoughts

4. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a type of depression related to the changing of seasons. People who suffer from SAD notice symptoms start and end at about the same times each year.

For many, symptoms start in the fall and continue into the winter months, though it is possible for SAD to occur in the spring or summer.

Signs and symptoms include:

- Hopelessness
- Fatigue
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities
- Symptoms that start out mild and progress in severity over time

Those who experience SAD in the winter have also noted the following unique symptoms:

- Heaviness in arms and legs
- Frequent oversleeping

- Cravings for carbohydrates/weight gain
- Relationship problems

5. Manic Depression

This is another name for Bipolar disorder, which is not covered in this pamphlet.



Talking therapies

There are a large number of different talking therapies for depression in New Zealand.

The following is a list of different types of talking therapies available:

- Counselling
- Bibliotherapy
- Cognitive behavioural therapy
- Family therapy
- Motivational interviewing
- Psychotherapy
- Dialectical behaviour therapy
- Interpersonal psychotherapy
- Problem solving therapy
- Multisystemic therapy
-

Medication for depression (antidepressants)

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)

SSRIs are the most commonly prescribed type of antidepressants. They affect serotonin in the brain, and they're likely to have fewer side effects for most people.

SSRIs can include citalopram (Celexa), escitalopram (Lexapro), fluoxetine (Prozac), paroxetine (Paxil), and sertraline (Zoloft).

Serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs)

SNRIs are the second most commonly prescribed type of antidepressants.

SNRIs can include duloxetine (Cymbalta), desvenlafaxine (Pristiq), levomilnacipran (Fetzima), and venlafaxine (Effexor).

Norepinephrine-dopamine reuptake inhibitors (NDRIs)

Bupropion (Wellbutrin) is the most commonly prescribed form of NDRI. It has fewer side effects than other antidepressants and is sometimes used to treat anxiety.

Tricyclic antidepressants

Tricyclics are known for causing more side effects than other types of antidepressants, so they are unlikely to be prescribed unless other medications are ineffective.

Examples include amitriptyline (Elavil), desipramine (Norpramin), doxepin (Sinequan), imipramine (Tofranil), nortriptyline (Pamelor), and protriptyline (Vivactil).

How can you support a loved one who is depressed?

Being depressed can be a very isolating and lonely experience. Knowing that people are thinking of you can really lift your spirits.

It might not seem like a lot, but being patient, doing things together and staying connected can be a big help. Simple ways to be supportive include:

- Having a coffee or walking together
- Watching funny video clips
- Listening to music
- Window shopping
- Phoning or texting to say hi
- Letting your loved one know you're a safe person to talk to

Often when people are feeling depressed they don't want to go out and do anything, as it all just feels too hard. Remember, being supportive isn't about making the depressed person do things.

It's about encouraging them to do something with you.

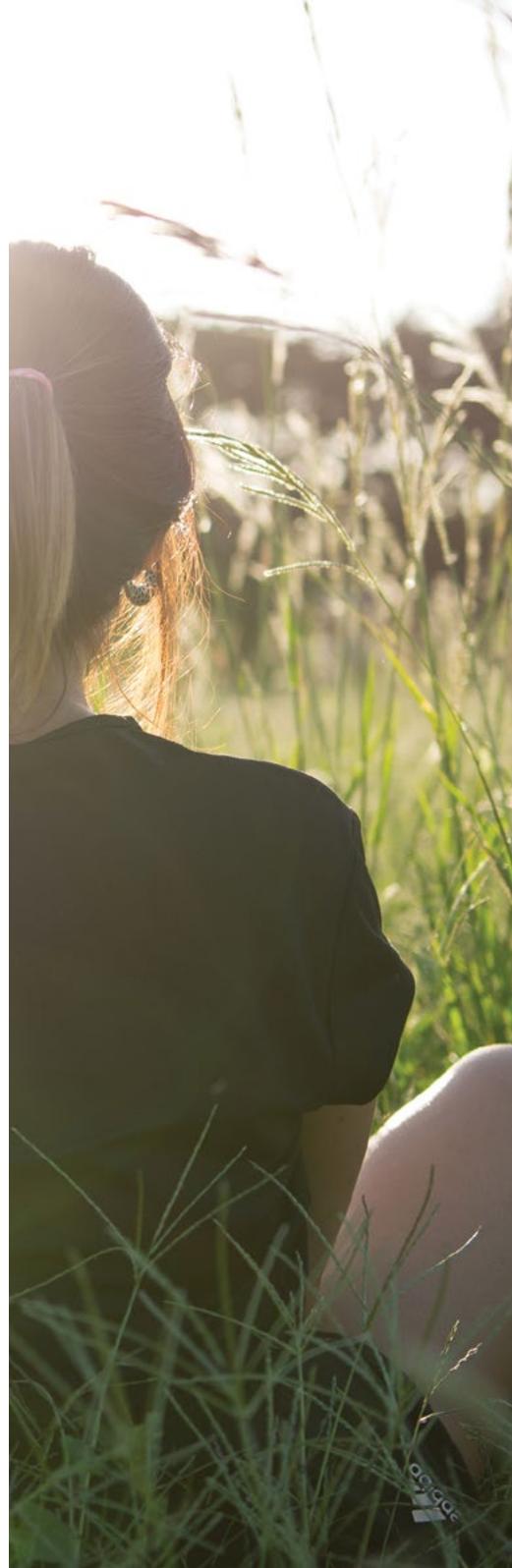
Have patience & take it one day at a time

It can be hard supporting people with depression, especially when you have so many ideas that could help.

It is important to remember that even people without depression do not always want to do activities with friends.

Something that may have worked before might not necessarily work again.

Depression is a process and it can take a long time to heal. Have patience and take it one day at a time.



How Yellow Brick Road can help you

Every day we set out to ensure whānau feel listened to, supported, equipped and ultimately confident to overcome the challenges they face.

If you are concerned about a whānau member experiencing depression, our whānau support workers can help you by providing support, information, education and advocacy services, such as:

- Listening to your concerns and questions
- Creating an action plan to help your loved one throughout their recovery
- Providing books, articles and information about locally-available services
- Support groups

Our services are free and confidential. Contact us today to find out more.

**It takes each of us to make
a difference for all of us.**

**It's whānau ora, and it is the
foundation that inspires every
aspect of our work.**

Yellow Brick Road is a national organisation that specialises in providing support for whānau who have a loved one experiencing mental health challenges.

After 40 years of experience working with people around New Zealand, we know that if the family of a loved one experiencing mental distress are correctly supported and empowered, the path they walk leads to increased wellbeing for the whole whānau.

Positive change is our singular focus. By working together, we can help you thrive.



Supporting families
towards mental wellbeing

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