

What is depression?



While it's natural to feel low from time to time, depression is a lasting feeling of sadness that can affect how you think, feel, and go about daily life.

It can range from mild to severe and may bring ongoing feelings of emptiness, hopelessness, or disconnection. You might also notice changes in your sleep, appetite, or energy.

1 in 7 people experience depression at some point in their lives.

Types of depression

Major depression

Intense feelings of sadness or low mood that last for weeks or months, with periods of feeling better in between.

Persistent depression

A low mood that lasts for two years or more. It may feel less intense day-to-day but can still have a big impact.

Seasonal depression

A drop in mood that happens during colder, darker months and lifts when the seasons change.

Antenatal & postnatal depression

Depression during pregnancy or after birth, affecting parents of any gender.

Situational depression

A short-term response to a difficult life event like a breakup or job loss.

Signs & effects

Depression can feel different for everyone, but some common experiences include:



Persistent sadness

Feeling low, empty, or hopeless on most days.



Loss of interest

No longer finding joy in work, school, activities, or hobbies.



Irritability or numbness

Feeling easily frustrated or emotionally detached.



Difficulty concentrating

Struggling to focus or make decisions.



Withdrawing

Pulling away from friends, family, or social activities.



Physical sensations

Fatigue, headaches, appetite changes, or sleep problems.

Causes

Depression doesn't have one single cause. It often develops from a mix of experiences and influences, such as:

Going through tough times

Things like financial stress, relationship problems, or losing a job can lead to feelings of sadness.

Difficult past experiences

Growing up in an unstable environment, facing trauma, or feeling unsupported can have lasting impacts.

Changes in your mental wellbeing

Unhelpful thought patterns, low self-esteem, or feeling disconnected from others can play a part.

Managing physical health challenges

Long-term pain, injuries, trouble sleeping, or hormonal changes can affect your mood.

Using substances to cope

Alcohol or other drugs can sometimes make feelings of sadness or hopelessness worse.

Family history

Sometimes, depression can run in families, making some people more likely to experience it.

Experiencing depression is never your fault. Whatever the cause, there are ways to navigate what you're feeling. And remember, support is available every step of the way.

Recognising how depression shows up

Having a plan like below can help you prepare for situations that might lead to feelings of depression. This can make it easier to spot what's happening and respond in ways that support your wellbeing.

Depression management plan

Anticipate	What might lead to feelings of depression? e.g., lack of sleep, isolation, not moving my body
Identify	How will I know I'm starting to feel depressed? e.g., low energy, irritability, changes in appetite
Manage	What can I do to recharge and boost my mood? e.g., go for a walk, prioritise sleep, call a friend



Practical management strategies



Create a routine

Regular sleep, meals, and activities can bring purpose and stability.



Cut back on alcohol & substances

Reducing use can improve your sleep quality and wellbeing.



Go for a walk outside

Fresh air and movement can help lift your mood.



Prioritise self-care

Making time for things you enjoy can help restore energy.



Spend time with others

Social connection can remind you that you're not alone and strengthen your sense of belonging.



Seek professional support

Therapies like CBT can help you manage difficult thoughts and feelings.

Want to try something now?

If you're feeling low or overwhelmed, a small action can help shift your energy. Try stepping outside to **use your five senses**, doing a few rounds of **box breathing**, or **reaching out to someone you trust**. Even small moments of calm and connection can make a difference.

5 SENSES TECHNIQUE

Look for...



5 things you can **see**



4 things you can **feel**



3 things you can **hear**

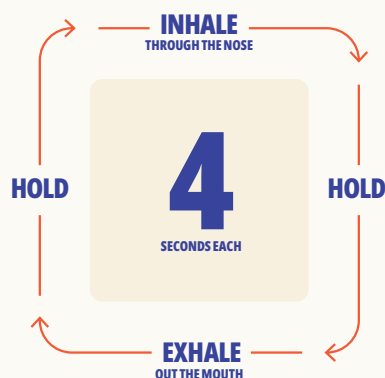


2 things you can **smell**



1 things you can **taste**

BOX BREATHING



TALK TO SOMEONE YOU TRUST



'Do you have time for a walk or phone chat today? Things have been feeling a bit heavy and I'd really like someone to listen.'



Everyone is different, so what works for someone else might not work for you, and that's okay.

The key is to keep experimenting until you find what helps you most.

Wherever you are, help is at your fingertips with the **Support Toolkit**

➔ lifeline.org.au/toolkit

When to seek help

You may want to speak to a health professional if:

- ✓ Your low mood lasts more than two weeks.
- ✓ You're withdrawing from friends, family, or activities you used to enjoy.
- ✓ You've noticed big changes in your sleep or appetite.
- ✓ You're finding it hard to concentrate or make decisions.
- ✓ You're feeling worthless, hopeless, or overwhelmed by guilt.
- ✓ You're experiencing thoughts of self-harm or suicide.

Reaching out can feel difficult, but it's a sign of strength.

Support is always available to help you feel more in control and hopeful for the future.

Support is available

Understanding and managing depression isn't something you have to do on your own.

Head to our **Support Toolkit** to find more practical strategies and discover national and local support services that can help.

The Support Toolkit also offers information on a wide range of mental health and wellbeing topics you can explore at your own pace, whenever you need.

Visit lifeline.org.au/depression/services or scan the QR code to get started.

If you're feeling overwhelmed right now, Lifeline is here to support you.

You can reach us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

☎ Call 13 11 14

✉ Text 0477 131 114

💬 Chat online at lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat

If your life is in danger, please call 000.

