

Depression – A ‘Five Areas’ Model

What is depression?

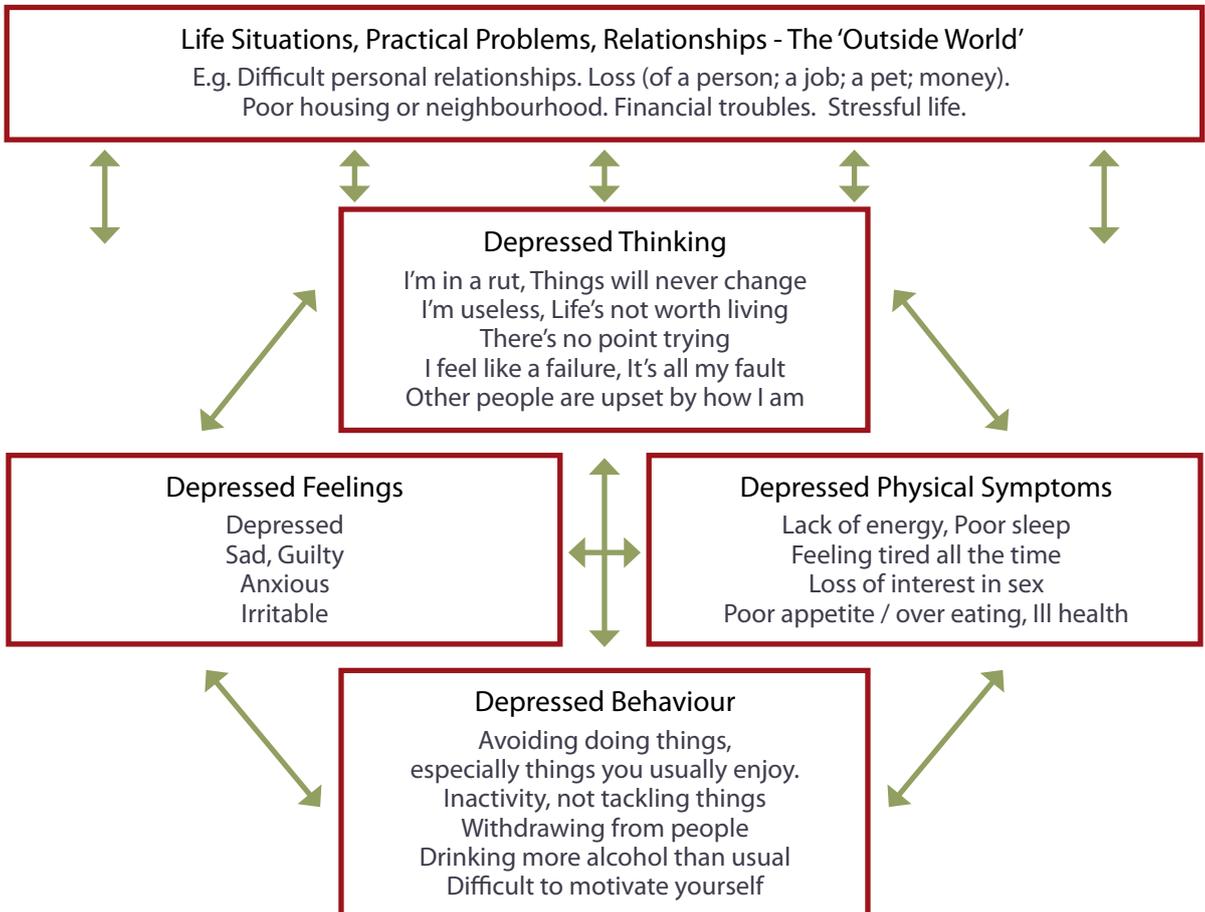
Depression is the most common mental health problem and the third most common reason for visiting GPs. Many people will at some time experience symptoms of depression, ranging from mild depression that a person can overcome with some support to more severe depression requiring professional help.



Below are some of the signs or symptoms that you may experience if you are depressed. We have divided these into 5 areas. The bottom four areas (depressed thinking, depressed feelings, depressed physical symptoms and depressed behaviour) are our individual responsibility and no one can make choices or changes in these areas but ourselves. The fifth area, the ‘Outside World’, can have a major effect on our

thoughts, feelings and behaviour but we as individuals can never be wholly responsible for what happens in the ‘Outside World’, although we may have some influence on it.

This structured way of looking at things is known as the ‘Five Areas Model’.



> How anxiety, stress & depression can develop into a problem

Related leaflets include:

- > Guided Self Help – An Introduction
- > Completing your own 5 areas review
- > Using Anti-Depressant Medication



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Contd.

Not every one will have all these symptoms and even people who are not depressed will have some of these symptoms from time to time.

What causes depression?

You are most likely to experience symptoms of depression when you are going through a stressful time, have experienced a loss such as someone close to you dying, or if you have to adjust to life changes, such as having a baby or becoming physically ill.

Depression can come on suddenly or build up over time. Some people are more prone to becoming depressed. This may be because of your body make up (including body chemistry), because of early life experiences, family influences or unhelpful beliefs that you have built into your life.

If the symptoms are part of adjusting to life events you will probably recover with some support from friends and family and by getting yourself back into doing things and enjoying things again.

What can help me deal with depression?

Depression is a common reaction to difficult events and experiencing the symptoms of depression does NOT mean that you are going mad or losing control. If the depression is mild you may be able to overcome it with time, your own helpful coping methods and support from others. Self-help material may also help with this.

If your depression is due to difficult life circumstances you should consider if you can do anything practical yourself to improve things. This is not always possible though, so you may find it helpful to talk with someone else about what you can do to change things for the better.

If the depression is more long lasting and you feel you need extra help, you may benefit from trying to use self-help materials with the help of a guide with some experience of using them. This will not only help you understand your problems but give you ideas on how to deal with them.

If your depression becomes more severe and self-help doesn't improve things you may need other forms of help and support such as anti-depressants, psychological therapy and help from other mental health professionals. This would be the case if you feel very depressed, hopeless, can't see things improving and even have thoughts of ending your life.

Remember:

- > Depression may be normal in the circumstances that you are in...
- > Depression can come & go and people often overcome it without help...
- > Self help strategies & support can help you overcome depression...
- > Things can improve even if you have more severe depression...

