

# Depression

### Condition:

Depression is a low mood that lasts for a long time and affects a child or young person's everyday life. In its mildest form, depression can mean just being in low spirits. It doesn't stop someone from leading their normal life but makes everything harder to do and seem less worthwhile. At its most severe, depression can be life-threatening because it can make someone feel suicidal.

If a young person is given a diagnosis of depression, they might be told that they have mild, moderate, or severe depression. This describes what sort of impact their symptoms are having on them currently, and what sort of treatment they are likely to be offered. They might move between mild, moderate, and severe depression during one episode of depression or across different episodes.

There are also some specific types of depression:

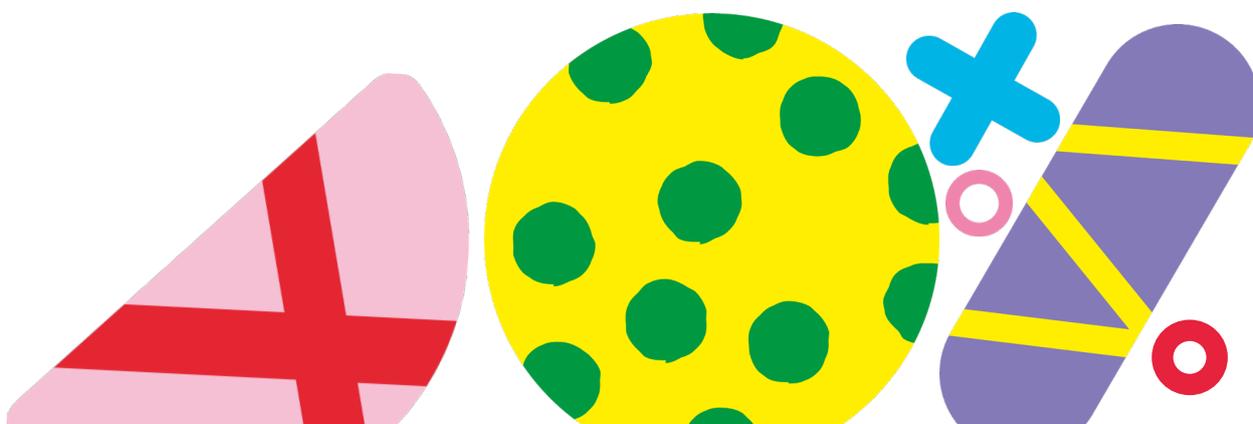
- Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) – depression that occurs at a particular time of year, or during a particular season.
- Dysthymia – continuous mild depression that lasts for two years or more. Also called persistent depressive disorder or chronic depression.
- Prenatal depression – depression that occurs during pregnancy. This is sometimes also called antenatal depression.
- Postnatal depression (PND) – depression that occurs in the first year after giving birth.

People who have a diagnosis of depression may also have a diagnosis of anxiety (see separate information sheet for this).

### Problem Areas:

A child or young person who has depression may feel:

- Down, upset, or tearful
- Restless, agitated, or irritable
- Guilty, worthless, and down on themselves
- Empty and numb
- Isolated and unable to relate to other people





- Finding no pleasure in life or things they usually enjoy
- A sense of unreality
- No self-confidence or self-esteem
- Hopeless and despairing
- Suicidal

Consequently, they may respond in a number of ways, through:

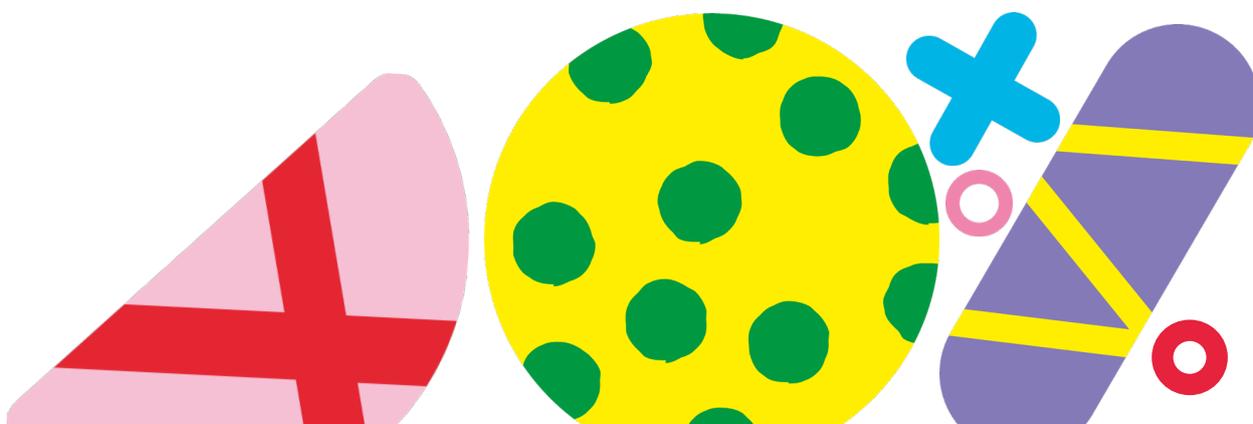
- Avoiding social events and activities they usually enjoy
- Self-harming or suicidal behaviour
- Difficulty speaking, thinking clearly, or making decisions
- Losing interest in sex
- Difficulty remembering or concentrating on things
- Using more tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs than usual
- Difficulty sleeping, or sleeping too much
- Feeling tired all the time
- No appetite and losing weight, or eating too much and gaining weight
- Physical aches and pains with no obvious physical cause
- Moving very slowly, or being restless and agitated

It is possible that children and young people who have depression may have psychotic symptoms or may self-harm or have suicidal thoughts.

### **Support strategies for your Group:**

The support of friends and family can play a very important role in someone recovering from depression. Here are some suggestions for how you can help.

- Support them to get help. You can't force anyone to get help if they don't want it, so it's important to reassure them that it's OK to ask for help, and that there is help there for them.





- Be open about depression. Lots of people can find it hard to open up and speak about how they're feeling. Try to be open about depression and difficult emotions, so that they know that it's OK to talk about what they're experiencing too.
- Keep in touch. It might be hard for them to have the energy to keep up contact, so try to keep in touch yourself. Even just a message to let them know that you are thinking of them can make a big difference to how someone feels.
- If you've not experienced depression yourself, it can be hard to understand why they can't just 'snap out of it'. Try not to blame them or put too much pressure on them to get better straight away, they are probably being very critical and harsh towards themselves already.
- Keep a balance. If someone is struggling, you might feel like you should take care of everything for them. While it might be useful to offer to help them do everything, it's also important to encourage them to do things for themselves. Everyone will need different support, so talk to them about what they might find useful to have your help with and identify things they can try to do themselves.
- Mind's information about depression can help you learn more about it.

### **Further information:**

Mind      <https://www.mind.org.uk>

Thanks to Mind for much of the material used in writing this article.

*'Invited to Belong' has been developed in partnership between Urban Saints and Youthscape.*



*Youthscape*

[www.urbansaints.org/invitedtobelong](http://www.urbansaints.org/invitedtobelong)