

## **FEELING BLUE?**

### **Recognising Depression and knowing how to get help**

#### **WHAT IS DEPRESSION?**

The word “depression” is often used to describe normal feelings of sadness. Feeling sad, blue or down is something we all experience at different times in our lives. However, if these feelings persist for an extended period of time (i.e. more than two weeks), then it is classed as depression.

Depression is NOT a sign of personal weakness or failure. Depression is NOT the normal grief we experience when we lose a loved one or experience a similar life event. Nor is it the normal sadness we feel when we experience everyday life stress.

#### **SOME OF THE SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION?**

There are many symptoms of depression that can range in intensity and severity. People with depression experience some or many of the following symptoms:

- Feelings of despair, sadness, hopelessness or helplessness
- Feelings of being unable to cope with everyday life
- Feelings of guilt and self-blame
- Being teary much of the time
- Difficulty in enjoying activities you previously enjoyed
- Poor concentration, motivation and energy
- Overuse of alcohol and/or drugs
- Withdrawing from others
- Negative thinking about yourself, your environment and your future
- Disturbances in your sleep eg can't go off to sleep or wake early unable to return to sleep, wanting to sleep more than usual
- Thinking of or planning suicide
- Changes in appetite eg over eating or loss of appetite
- Experiencing physical feelings of being sick, gastrointestinal problems and other aches and pains
- Feeling unmotivated, with impaired thinking and concentration
- Loss of interest in sexual activities

#### **WAYS TO HELP YOURSELF**

- Try to do some exercise and eat well. Continue to participate in your usual daily activities as much as possible
- Schedule in one pleasant thing for you to do for yourself each day
- If tasks seem overwhelming, break them down into smaller manageable pieces and congratulate yourself when you complete each smaller task

- Respect yourself – give yourself praise when you do something well
- Choose to be assertive – know your rights and learn how to exercise them
- Learn more - useful websites include:
  - [www.ecouch.anu.edu.au/welcome](http://www.ecouch.anu.edu.au/welcome) or [www.moodgym.anu.edu.au/](http://www.moodgym.anu.edu.au/) (these programs are interactive and teach strategies for managing depression)
  - [www.bluepages.anu.edu.au](http://www.bluepages.anu.edu.au)
  - [www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au)
  - [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)
  - [www.sane.org](http://www.sane.org)
  - [www.depressionet.com.au](http://www.depressionet.com.au)

## **WHERE TO GET HELP**

- See a Doctor – Your Doctor can talk to you about the depression and refer you to a Psychologist and/or possibly prescribe medication that can alleviate the symptoms of depression.
- See a Psychologist or Counsellor – Depression can respond well to therapy and usually would include educating you about the depression and exploring alternative ways for you to think, behave and to cope with everyday life stressors. It can also be useful in assisting you to sort out practical problems and conflicts. Enrolled ANU students are eligible for free counselling sessions at ANU Counselling.
- Join a group – There are a number of groups available in the community that can teach you strategies to manage the depression.

## **SOME USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS**

- ANU Counselling: phone 61780455
- ANU Crisis & Support Line: 24/7 phone 1300 050 327 or Text 0488 884 170
- National Health Co Op (ANU): phone 6178 0400
- Mental Health Assessment and Treatment Team (MHATT): 24/7 phone 62051065 or 1800 629 354
- Lifeline: 24/7 phone 131 114
- Mental Health Foundation Referral line: phone 6282 6658