Depression

You may be uncertain whether or not you are depressed. Everyone’s experience of depression is different, and there is a wide variety of symptoms which are listed below. Many people feel down occasionally, or go through bad patches, but have areas in their lives that make them feel good, and like things about themselves. For some people though, life is more of a struggle. They feel bad about themselves and their lives in most ways. At times they feel complete despair. If you feel like this, then you are probably depressed.

Symptoms of Depression

- Disliking or even hating yourself or people in general.
- Thinking negatively; always seeing the worst in everything.
- Finding everything a terrible effort.
- Being very irritable.
- Sleeping too little or too much.
- Eating too little or too much.
- Heavy dependency on alcohol or drugs.
- Cutting yourself off from other people including loss of interest in sex.
- Unable to stop crying or unable to release tears.

Dealing with Depression

Depression spans a spectrum. At one end you can struggle on leading a more or less normal life, but feeling awful; at the other end the depression may be life-threatening and you may feel suicidal. How can you help yourself?

With moderate depression:

- Keep as occupied as you can with things that really interest you.
- Get physical - play sport, jog, dance - do anything that stops you brooding.
- Do anything which makes you laugh.
- Look after yourself physically.
- Eat healthily and avoid drugs.
- Pay attention to your appearance to make yourself feel good
- Treat yourself from time to time
- Try to make your living environment as pleasant and comfortable as possible.
- Ask for help. Others are usually very willing to listen.
• Don't hold your feelings in. Cry and get angry if you need to.
• Practise challenging some of your negative ideas - especially about yourself. Are you really a worse person or are you just judging yourself too harshly?

For severe depression you need to consider getting help.

Severe depression is when:
• You cannot function normally e.g. you are not going to lectures/eating/getting out of bed,
• You are actively considering suicide.

Finding Help and Further Information

It may be difficult to put any of the above suggestions into action if you are very depressed. If that is the case, then it is important that you seek help. There are several sources of help -

• Contact the Student Counselling Service who are very used to dealing with depression. If they cannot help you, they will be able to refer you to someone who can. Otherwise you can contact the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy to locate a counsellor.
• Visit the Students Against Depression Website.
• Don't be afraid to see your GP if you are depressed. Your GP may refer you to appropriate help or may offer medication in the form of anti-depressants. Medication does not necessarily take away the cause of the depression, but may give you enough of a lift to take action to deal with the depression yourself as suggested above.

Around 75% of the population suffers from depression at some time in their lives. If you learn to recognise your own particular set of symptoms which tell you you're depressed, and acquaint yourself with the coping mechanisms for trying to deal with them, you can often learn how to manage your depression. It is very important not to think you are weak or inadequate because you are depressed, but to marshal your resources for finding a way out of your depression. Many people find it helpful to read and learn more about the management of depression. There is a wealth of literature on the subject available from most large book stores. Below are a couple of the titles you may find helpful.

• Depression: The Way Out of Your Prison - Dorothy Rowe - Routledge - A very human and readable explanation of depression and ways to deal with it.
• Depression - Paul Hauck - Sheldon- A very short and easily read book which helps challenge depressive thinking.
• Understanding Depression (leaflet) - Mind Publications - Briefly covers what depression is and how to get help. Gives useful addresses and help lines.

You may also find more information on the internet at:

• The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy - 0870 443 5252 www.bacp.co.uk
• Mind (National Association for Mental Health)
• www.mind.org.uk
• Depression Alliance - 0845 123 23 20 www.depressionalliance.org
• Students Against Depression www.studentsagainstdepression.org