

"Can You See Me?" Campaign: Depression Help Sheet

Understanding Depression

Depression is a common but serious mood disorder that affects how you feel, think, and handle daily activities. It can lead to persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and loss of interest in activities once enjoyed. Depression varies in severity and can interfere with all aspects of daily life.

Signs and Symptoms of Depression

1. **Persistent Sadness:** Feeling down or hopeless for most of the day, nearly every day.
2. **Loss of Interest:** Losing interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed, including hobbies, socializing, or work.
3. **Changes in Sleep:** Experiencing changes in sleep patterns, such as insomnia, waking up too early, or oversleeping.
4. **Changes in Appetite:** Significant weight loss or gain, or changes in appetite, which may result in overeating or loss of appetite.
5. **Fatigue:** Feeling tired, sluggish, or lacking energy, even after restful sleep.
6. **Difficulty Concentrating:** Trouble focusing, making decisions, or remembering things, which can affect work or school performance.
7. **Feelings of Worthlessness or Guilt:** Having low self-esteem, feeling excessively guilty or worthless, and blaming oneself for problems.
8. **Thoughts of Death or Suicide:** Persistent thoughts of death, suicide, or self-harm, as well as suicide attempts or plans.

Types of Depression

1. **Major Depressive Disorder:** Characterized by severe symptoms that interfere with daily life activities, lasting for at least two weeks.
2. **Persistent Depressive Disorder (Dysthymia):** A long-term form of depression lasting two years or more, with milder but chronic symptoms.
3. **Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD):** Depression related to changes in seasons, typically occurring in the fall and winter months due to reduced sunlight.
4. **Postpartum Depression:** Experienced by some women after giving birth, characterized by mood swings, crying spells, and difficulty bonding with the baby.
5. **Bipolar Disorder:** Involves periods of depression alternating with periods of mania or hypomania.

How Friends and Family Can Help

1. **Offer Support:** Listen without judgment and offer empathy and understanding. Let them know you're there for them.
2. **Encourage Treatment:** Suggest seeking help from a mental health professional, such as a therapist or psychiatrist. Offer to help find resources or accompany them to appointments.
3. **Provide Practical Assistance:** Help with daily tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, or running errands, especially during periods of low energy or motivation.
4. **Encourage Physical Activity:** Encourage gentle exercise or outdoor activities, which can improve mood and overall well-being.
5. **Stay Connected:** Stay in touch regularly, even if it's just a text or phone call to check in. Loneliness can exacerbate depression symptoms.
6. **Learn about Depression:** Educate yourself about depression to better understand what your loved one is going through. Be patient and supportive.

Resources for Support and Information

1. **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):** Provides education, support groups, and resources for individuals and families affected by depression. <https://www.nami.org/>
2. **Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA):** Offers peer-led support groups and educational resources for individuals living with depression. <https://www.dbsalliance.org/>
3. **Crisis Text Line:** Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a trained crisis counselor 24/7 for support and resources.
4. **Therapy and Counseling Services:** Seek professional help from therapists, counselors, or psychologists specializing in depression. Your primary care physician can also provide referrals.

Remember, depression is treatable, and help is available. Recovery may take time, but with the right support and treatment, individuals can regain hope and find relief from their symptoms.

Together, we can overcome depression. You are seen, you are heard, and you are valued.