

A silhouette of a person standing on a beach at sunset, surrounded by a large flock of birds flying in the sky. The person is facing away from the camera, looking out at the ocean. The sky is filled with many birds in flight, and the sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The water reflects the light from the sun and the birds.

THE TREATMENT OF DEPRESSION

The Consulting Clinic.
www.theconsultingclinic.ie

The World Health Organization characterizes depression as one of the most disabling disorders in the world, affecting roughly one in five women and one in ten men at some point in their lifetime. Depression is the third most common reason for GP appointments. It is more than just feeling “down.” It is a serious illness caused by changes in brain chemistry. Due to the rise of depression Psychologists have been researching depression and argue that factors contributing to depression include genetics, stress, grief, increased shame, changes in hormone levels, certain medical conditions, difficult life changes or circumstances and difficulties regulating emotions. Any of these factors alone or in combination can precipitate changes in brain chemistry that lead to depression’s many symptoms.

SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

Depression has a variety of symptoms including:

- Loss of interest in activities
- Loss of energy
- Difficulty concentrating
- Hopelessness
- Loss of appetite and weight/ increase in appetite
- Self-criticism
- Withdrawal from people
- Poor memory
- Suicidal thoughts/plans
- Changes in sleep

THE IMPACT OF THINKING ON DEPRESSION

Individuals are vulnerable to depression when they get caught up in their thoughts and judge their experience. Certain ways you think can cause and maintain depression. Common thoughts include:

Mindreading: Jumping to conclusions about what others are thinking of you, for example, ‘They think I’m boring’; ‘They will think I am a fool’.

Fortune telling: Negative and pessimistic predictions about the future, for example: ‘I’ll never get over this’; ‘I’ll be rejected’; ‘I’ll make a fool of myself’.

Catastrophizing: ‘Worst case’ thoughts and images that enter your mind, for example, concluding that something terrible will happen if you go out of your comfort zone, “Everything will go wrong”.

All-or-nothing-thinking: Also called ‘black-or-white’ thinking, this refers to thinking in extreme terms like ‘I should do something perfectly or not bother at all’.

Shoulds: Rigid rules you place on yourself and others, examples include: “I should be able to...”; “They should know what I am thinking”; ‘I should get the approval of everyone’, “I should criticise myself for my failings”; “I shouldn’t be depressed”; “I shouldn’t cry”.

Discounting the positives: Not seeing the positive and only focusing on the negative, for example, “That doesn’t count because anyone could do that”

Self criticism/labelling: “I am a failure”; “I am weak”; “I am bad”

Depression can be made even worse when you buy into your thoughts. This often leads to increased efforts to control, escape or investing large amounts of time getting caught up analysing our thoughts and trying to find unanswerable questions, also known as ruminating.

BEHAVIOURS

When engaging in unhelpful thoughts, people tend to engage in unhelpful behaviours that maintain depression, including:

- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Avoid activities that used to give you pleasure
- Use of alcohol or drugs to numb feelings
- Ruminates about the past
- Stay in bed for large periods of the day, also known as 'duvet diving'
- Spend a lot of time on the internet or watching TV
- Distracting behaviours
- Isolation

The solutions of avoidance and escape can make you feel worse and more depressed.

EFFECTIVE TREATMENTS FOR DEPRESSION

The National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE), is responsible for producing guidelines for the treatment of mental health conditions and is highly regarded throughout the world. The guidelines can be downloaded from their website www.nice.org.uk. These guidelines are based on scientific evidence. The following are all recommended approaches for the treatment of depression in adolescents or adults:

- For mild depression, the national guidelines recommend six to eight sessions of counselling over a period of ten to twelve weeks.
- **Cognitive Behaviour Therapy** (CBT) has proven effective in the treatment of depression. CBT involves thought challenging – moving away from unhelpful thoughts to rational thoughts and activity scheduling to aid moving out of the depression cycle. CBT has been found to be as effective as anti-depressant medication. It is directive, active and collaborative in its approach. Homework is set in between sessions to generalise the skills.
- **Behavioural Activation** (BA) has proven effective as it targets unhelpful behaviours. It does not challenge thoughts but rather gives you skills to 'defuse' from unhelpful thoughts.
- **Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy** (MBCT) has strong evidence based for recurrent depression. It has been endorsed by NICE for 3 or more episodes of depression. Results have shown that MBCT is more effective than maintenance doses of antidepressants in preventing relapse and can also reduce the severity of symptoms. MBCT is delivered in a group format over the course of 8 weeks.

SELF-HELP BOOKS ON DEPRESSION

If you suspect you are suffering from depression, reach out to your GP to review symptoms and discuss treatment options.

Recommended books:

- *The Mindful Way through Depression* by Mark Williams, John Teasdale, Zindel Segal and Jon Kabat-Zinn. • *Overcoming depression* by Christopher Williams
- *Mind Over Mood. Change How You Feel by Changing the Way You Think* by Dennis Greeberger and Christine A. Padesky.

If you feel depression is affecting you and you would like to book a therapy appointment, contact the clinic for a confidential appointment.

[Contact](#)

The Consulting Clinic

This guide is for the purpose of sharing information and does not replace therapy.

For more information or to book an appointment contact the clinic.

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