



Understanding depression and anxiety in young people

Anxiety and depression are common conditions. In Australia, one in six people aged 16 to 24 experience anxiety in any 12-month period and around 160,000 young people aged 16 to 24 live with depression each year. Although girls are more likely than boys to experience anxiety and depression, boys often find it harder to talk about their feelings and get help. The good news is that effective treatments are available for both anxiety and depression.

What is anxiety?

We all feel anxious from time to time – about exam results or doing a presentation in front of a group. This kind of anxiety is a normal part of life, only lasts a day or so and doesn't affect your health or day-to-day life. A certain amount of anxiety is even good for us – it gets us hyped up to perform at our best.

But, for some people, these anxious feelings happen for no apparent reason and are much more extreme. Anxiety is more than feeling stressed – it's a serious condition that gets in the way of other parts of your life, like how you do at school or work, and how you get on with other people. It'll usually be far more intense than normal anxiety, and go on for weeks, months or even longer.

Is it anxiety?

The symptoms of anxiety are sometimes not that obvious. They often develop gradually and, since we all experience some anxiety, it can be hard

to know how much is too much. Some common symptoms of anxiety include:

- hot and cold flushes
- racing heart
- tightening of the chest
- snowballing worries
- obsessive thinking and compulsive behaviour.

For more information on anxiety, visit www.youthbeyondblue.com or call our support service on **1300 22 4636**.

If you are concerned you (or a friend) might be experiencing anxiety, please talk to a GP or other health professional.

Types of anxiety

There are different types of anxiety. The six most common are:

- generalised anxiety disorder (GAD)
- social phobia
- specific phobias
- obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)
- post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- panic disorder.

See *Youthbeyondblue Dealing with anxiety disorders* fact sheet for more information.

What is depression?

Everyone feels sad, moody or miserable sometimes. Usually it's a reaction to something, like fighting with family or friends, breaking up with someone, changing schools or moving away from home.

But some people feel sad or miserable most of the time. They stop enjoying life and lose interest in the activities and things they used to like. Depression is more than just a low mood – it's a serious condition that makes it hard to cope from day to day. You may find it harder than usual to focus at school or to perform well at work and may have problems getting along with family and friends.

Is it depression?

Depression isn't just about feeling low – it usually leads to lasting changes in how you feel, act and think.

For more than two weeks, have you:

- felt sad, down or miserable, or irritable most of the time
- lost interest or enjoyment in nearly all of your usual activities?

You might also be:

- not doing so well at school, work or university and/or
- experiencing changes in your relationships with family and friends.

It's important to note that everyone experiences some of these symptoms from time to time and it may not necessarily mean a person is depressed. Equally, not every person who is experiencing depression will have all of these symptoms.

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If you are concerned you (or a friend) might be experiencing depression, please talk to a GP or other health professional.

Getting support

Feeling down and anxious from time to time is part of being human. But when these feelings seriously affect your day-to-day life, it might be depression or anxiety.

The good news is that effective treatments are available and the sooner a person seeks help, the sooner he or she can recover.

Take the first step

The first step in dealing with depression or anxiety is talking to someone. Start by talking to someone you trust – maybe a parent, teacher, school counsellor, family member or friend. They can help you decide what to do next.

Seeing a doctor (a General Practitioner or GP) or visiting a youth mental health service (such as headspace) is a good way to start. GPs are used to recognising and treating common problems, including depression, anxiety and alcohol and drug concerns. They can help you to work out the best ways to cope with how you're feeling and make a plan to get through it. They can also refer you to someone who is an expert in treating mental health conditions, such as a psychologist or psychiatrist.

If you're uncomfortable with the first person you talk to, it's okay to try someone else. The main thing is that you trust the person and can talk to them, so they have the information they need to work out what's going on and what might be the best way forward.

What treatments are available?

Psychological therapies are the main treatments for depression and anxiety in young people.

Two psychological therapies are especially effective – cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) and interpersonal therapy (IPT). Working with a psychologist, these therapies can help you to change your negative thoughts and feelings, get involved in activities again and stop your depression or anxiety from coming back again.

For some people, the doctor may think that medication is also necessary,

but only if the depression or anxiety is severe or it isn't improving with other treatments. If you do start taking medication (e.g. an antidepressant), your doctor will monitor you closely for a while. You should also continue psychological therapies and self-help.

See *Youthbeyondblue Treatments for depression or anxiety* and *Antidepressants for the treatment of depression* fact sheets for more information.

Recovery

There is no one proven way to recover from depression and anxiety, and recovery can take time. With appropriate treatment and the right support, there are many things you

can do to help yourself get better and stay well, such as:

- learning new ways to reduce and manage stress
- maintaining a healthy lifestyle, such as eating a healthy and balanced diet, exercising regularly and getting a good night's sleep
- avoiding alcohol and other drugs
- being aware of situations or events that may set you back.

It's also important to keep talking to people about how you are feeling.

See *Youthbeyondblue Recovering from depression and anxiety* fact sheet for more information.

Where to find more information

beyondblue

www.youthbeyondblue.com

Learn more about depression and anxiety, or talk it through with our support service.

☎ 1300 22 4636

✉ Email or 💬 chat to us online at www.beyondblue.org.au/getsupport

Lifeline

www.lifeline.org.au

13 11 14

Access to crisis support, suicide prevention and mental health support services.

mindhealthconnect

www.mindhealthconnect.org.au

Access to trusted, relevant mental health care services, online programs and resources.

headspace

www.headspace.com

1800 650 890

ReachOut.com

www.reachout.com

Kids Helpline

1800 551 800

Suicide Call Back Service

1300 659 467



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