



Depression

What is Depression?¹

Depression is more than just feeling sad. It can be a serious condition that negatively impacts someone's life. Depression comes in different forms, some being lifelong and persistent, and others tied to specific times. Peripartum (commonly known as postpartum) depression affects women around the birth of a child. One in 8 adults will have experienced depression, with most first occurrences happening around the early 20s. While there is no clear cause of depression, it has been linked to chemical imbalances in the brain.

Risk Factors

- **Environment:** adverse childhood experiences, stressful life events, parental loss/separation, continual exposure to violence, etc.
- **Genes:** inherited through genetic material.
- **Personality:** personality traits that predispose a person towards depression (e.g. negative affectivity, presence of other mental disorders, low self-esteem, etc.)

Consequences of Depression

The impact of depression on daily functioning varies from person to person. Depression can be persistent or periodical with differing levels of symptom severity and life impact. Here are some possible symptoms:

Social	Personal	Situational
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Withdrawal from social situations• Disruption in family life and relationships with friends• Social isolation• Substance abuse - self medication• Slowed speech• Social rejection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Depressed mood (males may express as anger)• Thoughts of death (thoughts, plans, and attempts at suicide)• Significant change in weight (loss or gain)• Difficulty sleeping (too much or too little)• Difficulty concentrating, distractibility• Change in energy levels• Unexplained physical ailments (e.g. headache or muscle pain)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulties at school and at work• Inability to maintain employment• Poor coping skills

How to Help Friends and Family Struggling with Depression^{2,3}

Sleep, exercise and nutrition are areas of struggle for people with depression; help your friend take care in these areas. Additional ways to help include:

- Help your friend feel heard. Do not trivialize their experiences, even though it may seem out of proportion.
- **Help them with little things** that can be overwhelming for those struggling with depression (e.g. cooking a meal, cleaning)
- Have **realistic expectations**: depression can be serious and is not always easily “fixed;” be **patient** with your friend and understand that there can be underlying **physical causes** to depression
- Help them **get active**: join them in taking a walk or exercising
- **Encourage** them to take care of themselves: taking showers, getting haircuts, seeing a doctor
- **Help them laugh**: tell a joke or watch something funny
- **Take care of yourself**: make sure that you take care of yourself as well so that you are available and have the capacity to help them.
- **Encourage them to seek help**

What Does the Bible say About Depression?

People struggling with depression can sometimes feel that they are the cause of their depression or that they have done something to deserve feeling depressed. However, depression, like most mental disorders, is often related to underlying biology. While thoughts, actions, and circumstances can all contribute to feelings of depression, it is not a person’s fault that they struggle. The Bible offers hope for those who are depressed. Jesus promised rest for those who are weary and burdened and to give them rest (Matthew 11:28-29). God promises that he is “close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit” (Psalm 35:18). He even promises to heal the broken-hearted and bind up their wounds (Psalm 147:3). The weight of depression can be crushing; however, God offers help to those who need encouragement.

Treatment⁴

Early recognition of and treatment of depression is key. Healthy eating, exercise, and sleeping well are key ingredients to treating people with depression. There are many different treatment options. Some of these include:

- **Medication**: can help balance neurotransmitters connected with depressive symptoms (see a doctor or psychiatrist)

- **Cognitive behavioural therapy:** aimed at targeting the thoughts and behaviours associated with depression
- **Interpersonal therapy:** teaches awareness of interpersonal patterns that are seen as the major problems with depression and helps a person improve them

The relationship between client and counsellor is typically seen as a key ingredient to successful treatment outcomes. While many counsellors believe in treating their clients with an unconditional positive regard, counselling based in the unconditional love of the Bible will help counsellors approach their clients from a nonjudgmental standpoint.⁵ From this basis, people can be enabled to explore the context and possible triggers of their depression and address them in a safe environment.

For more information or counselling support, please contact:

Christian Counselling Services

<http://www.saskatoonccs.com/>

(306) 244-9890

chcounselling@sasktel.net

¹ American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Washington, DC.

² Kelley. (2014, Feb. 14). How to show love to someone with depression. [web log post] Retrieved from <http://www.thedarlingbakers.com/lovesomeonewithdepression/>

³ Smith, M., Barston, S., & Segal, J. (2016, September). How to help someone with depression. [web log post] Retrieved from <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/depression/helpingadepressedperson.htm>

⁴ Dobson, K. (2014, December). "Psychology works" fact sheet: Depression. Retrieved from http://www.cpa.ca/docs/File/Publications/FactSheets/PsychologyWorksFactSheet_Depression.pdf

⁵ Tan, S. Y. (2011). *Counselling and Psychotherapy A Christian Perspective*. Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, Michigan.