

Depression & Anxiety

can effect anybody at any time



HELPLINE

0800 21 22 23

(8am to 8pm)

0800 567 567

(24 hours)



Netcare Foundation
Changing lives

South Africans of all races, ages, genders and cultures can suffer from Depression & Anxiety. You are not alone. There is help.

www.sadag.org


Depression

Did you know that 1 in 3 South Africans will or do have a mental health condition in their lifetime?

Depression is treated very successfully but 3/4 of people suffer alone and in silence because:

- ⊙ Depression is often not considered a 'real illness'
- ⊙ Many people believe that depression shows weakness of character
- ⊙ Many people blame themselves for their depression
- ⊙ People are embarrassed to ask for help
- ⊙ Many people are afraid of the stigma of depression and fear being discriminated against by family, friends and colleagues
- ⊙ Depression can be confused with other illnesses and is often not recognised

Depression Symptoms

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- ✓ Feeling sad, anxious or 'empty' most of the time
 - ✓ Loss of interest and/or pleasure in hobbies or activities once enjoyed
 - ✓ Feeling of hopelessness
 - ✓ Feeling helpless, guilty or to blame
 - ✓ Loss of energy, fatigue, sluggishness, or feeling 'slow'
 - ✓ Restlessness, irritability, anger
 - ✓ Changes in sleeping habits
 - ✓ Changes in eating habits / Unexplained weight loss or weight gain
 - ✓ Difficulty concentrating, making decisions, or remembering things
 - ✓ Physical aches and pains that don't respond to treatment – headaches, stomach, back & neck pain
 - ✓ Thought of death or suicide, strong suicide ideation, suicide attempts

Not everyone will experience every symptom.

Symptoms should be present daily, almost the whole day, for at least 2 weeks.

Causes of Depression

Depression has many possible causes and is usually brought on by a variety of different factors. Sometimes, a specific event may lead to depression – like a divorce, loss of a loved one, an accident. At other times, depression seems to come on for no apparent reason, even when life is going well.

Causes of Depression include:

External factors: Relationship break-up, a traumatic event, unemployment, illness, financial worries, legal problems, retirement, loss of a loved one

Internal factors: Medical illness and their treatment can trigger depression - like stroke, diabetes, cancer, HIV/AIDS; chemical imbalances in the brain

Family history: Having a family member with depression increases the chance of depression in children & siblings

Treatment for Depression

Depression is the most treatable mental illness.

There are different types of treatment for depression:

Medication (like anti-depressants):

80% of people with depression make a good recovery while on medication. Medication takes at least 3 weeks to start working so give them a chance and keep in regular contact with our doctor. You may have mild side-effects like a dry mouth, dizziness or nausea for a couple of weeks. These will pass. Do not suddenly stop medication if you are feeling better. Always consult your doctor first. Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, have any other illnesses, or if you are on any other medication.

Psychotherapy (Talk Therapy):

Psychotherapy is when you talk to a psychologist, social worker, or counsellor to get a new understanding about your illness and the tools to cope well in the future. You can attend individual therapy, family and group therapy as well as join a Support Group.

Support Groups

Support Groups are a very good way to get understanding, support and advice from people who know how you feel because they have felt the same way themselves. Support Groups are run for patients by patients and offer a safe place where you can share your thoughts, experiences, fears and hopes and receive non-judgemental guidance and help.

**Call SADAG 0800 21 22 23 for
Support Groups in your area**

Anxiety

When you have Anxiety or Panic Disorder it is very important to remember that although your feelings & symptoms are very frightening, they are not dangerous or harmful. What you are feeling is only a very strong version of the body's normal reaction to stress, which is designed to help you & not hurt you.

Anxiety Symptoms

- Feeling inexplicably frightened or scared
- Tingling and numbness in fingers, face, toes
- Dizziness and feeling light-headed
- Disorientation
- Racing heart
- Hot flushes, cold sweats
- Chest pain
- Nausea
- Difficulty breathing
- Fear of losing control, going 'crazy', or doing something embarrassing
- Fear of dying or having a heart attack



Anxiety & Panic usually begins in young adulthood – although older people and children can also be affected.

Women are twice as likely to suffer from an Anxiety Disorder than men.

Panic Disorder

A Panic Attack is a short times of terrifying fear combined with physical symptoms like racing heart, dizziness, tingling in fingers & the face, feeling out of breath, or chest pain. This can happen unexpectedly. Most people with Panic Disorder fear having another panic attack and avoid places or activities they believe to be risky – like driving, or going to crowded shopping centres. While a Panic Attack only lasts a minute or two, it can feel much longer.

Symptoms generally disappear an hour or so later.

Causes of Panic and Anxiety

There are many causes for Anxiety Disorders, including family history, trauma, and other medical illnesses and medications.

Causes of Anxiety and Panic include:

External factors: Severe stress like work stress or exams; loss of a loved one, surgery or childbirth, or following a trauma

Internal factors: Medical illness and some medications; caffeine, sugar and salt can also result in panic attacks and anxiety

Family history: Having a family member who suffers from an anxiety disorder increases the risk of anxiety in children and siblings

Self-Help Tips for Panic

The more you try to fight your feelings of anxiety, or wish them away, the scarier they become. Coping with panic and anxiety means facing up to what your symptoms are and reading as much as you can about your illness.

- 1 Concentrate on the present.** Be mindful of what is around you – where are you, who are you with, focus on your surroundings and on your deep breathing.
- 2 Remember that you are fine and you are safe.** Anxiety attacks feel much scarier and more dangerous than they are.
- 3 Focus on the little things.** talk to a friend, watch a funny video, count backwards from 100, smell a flower, or focus on what the texture of a wall or desk is.

Treatment & Setbacks

It is very important for people who suffer from any form of anxiety to be educated about their illness. Treatment is highly successful and there are different types of treatment depending on what form your anxiety takes.

It is normal to have another panic attack eventhough you have been 'feeling fine' for a while. But your panic attacks will happen less and less frequently and will be less and less severe over time. There will be longer times between attacks before they stop altogether.

Self Help for Depression & Anxiety

Self Help empowers you to cope better with your illness so you can get well faster and stay mentally healthy longer.

Self Help Tips

- **Knowledge is power** – the more you understand about mental illness in general, and about your illness, the better you will cope now and in the future.
- **Expect your mood to improve and get more balanced over time** – it doesn't happen overnight. Feeling better takes time and happens slowly, but it does happen.
- **Read as much as you can** about your illness, speak to other people who share your diagnosis (see Support Groups), join SADAG for news and updates.
- **Be healthy** – Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet, avoid smoking and alcohol, limit your sugar, salt and caffeine, and exercise and sleep enough.
- **Get to know yourself and your body** – remember what makes you laugh, speak to people who make you smile, do things you enjoy.
- **Keep your mind busy** with a hobby, creative interests and activities, reading or watching a movie.
- **Recognise your limit each day and listen to yourself** – it is ok to break tasks down into smaller, more manageable steps.
- **Do what you can each day** – it will increase.
- **Remember that it is OK not to feel OK.** Talk about how you feel and don't isolate yourself or hide from friends and loved ones.
- **Allow your loved ones to help you.** It is absolutely OK to ask for help when you need it – and to accept help.
- Whether you have Depression, Anxiety or Bipolar, much of what you feel when you start treatment is the illness. **Don't be too hard on yourself.**

Contact SADAG



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