

FACTFILE:

GCSE

LEARNING FOR LIFE AND WORK

Unit 2 – Personal Development



What is Depression?

1.4 Personal health and well-being

Developing a healthy mind:

- The causes and consequences of depression and ways of dealing with it.

Purpose of Factfile?

To offer an informed overview for students of the causes and consequences of depression and ways of dealing with it in preparation for the Unit 2 exam on Personal Development.

Questions to consider?

What is depression?

Who gets depression and what causes it?

What are the symptoms of depression?

How is depression treated?

What happens if depression is not treated?

Where to go for help?

Additional information sources?

Depression Vodcast

<http://studentsagainstdepression.org/> – Students against Depression website which has an excellent range of resources for everything concerning depression.

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/mental-health-northern-ireland-fundamental-facts>

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/FF16%20Northern%20ireland.pdf> – Mental Health Foundation website with downloadable PDF with statistics and information about mental health in Northern Ireland.

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dhssps/hscims-2015-key-facts.pdf> – Graphical document with a range of statistics and information about health in Northern Ireland including mental health.

<http://www.refineni.com/mental-health-stats/4578563576> – Refine Northern Ireland website which contains a range of depression related resources as well as access to the WRAP treatment programme.

<http://studentsagainstdepression.org/take-action/request-our-free-awareness-resources/> – Students against Depression website resources page. Students, schools and parents can download a range of free resources including a warning signs poster and parents' guide.

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<http://www.headmeds.org.uk/> – Straight talking mental health and wellbeing website for young people including information about medication and treatment.

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/health-and-wellbeing/mental-health> – How to access mental health services in Northern Ireland.

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<http://www.mind.org.uk/> – Mind website with information and support for anyone experiencing or affected by mental health issues.

<http://www.mindingyourhead.info/> – Website which not only contains information and advice about depression but also aims to reduce the stigma associated with the condition.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCqm0V8nerY> – **We All Have Problems** Mental Health Awareness Film about depression made by young people.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NiQitBSFdDw> – **One in Four** Mental Health Awareness Film about depression made by young people.

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Depression/Pages/Introduction.aspx> – NHS website with medical information about depression, causes and treatment.

Introduction

Depression is a common condition today with most people being affected by it at some time in their lives, either suffering themselves or knowing someone who is suffering from depression. There are many charities and organisations collecting information about mental health and depression today and there is general agreement that depression is a growing problem which affects people's quality of life and in the most severe cases can lead to self-harm and suicide.

What is unclear are the reasons for the increase in depression in today's society. It may be due to the pace and pressure of modern day life, or it could be that as mental health issues become less stigmatised and more people feel it is something they can now openly discuss. Whatever the reason for the increase it is essential that we are well informed about how to recognise symptoms and behaviour associated with depression in order to find the correct treatment to move forward and enjoy our lives.

What is depression?

Many people say they are depressed when they are feeling fed up or 'down in the dumps' but this is not the same as clinical depression which is far more debilitating and severe. To be diagnosed with depression symptoms not only need to be severe enough to disrupt your everyday life but you need to have been suffering with symptoms for at least two weeks.

Who gets depression and what causes it?

Anyone can get depression; it does not mean in any way an individual is lacking in something or weak which can be common stereotypes associated with the condition. However there are some factors and life events which make the likelihood of suffering from depression more likely. These include:

- If close relatives have suffered from depression, anxiety or substance/alcohol abuse;
- If events or situations which cause extreme stress or pressure are present over a long period of time, for example, emotional loss such as bereavement, relationship problems or money worries;
- If the individual has suffered from emotional or physical abuse from others during their lives;
- Some illnesses and disabilities can make depression more likely, for example, pregnancy, cancer, multiple sclerosis;
- People who are perfectionists and need a high level of control in their lives can suffer depression if things do not go to plan, feeling that this is their fault and that if they had managed things better nothing would have gone wrong.

In some cases people may have a combination of the factors above which make depression more likely.

What are the symptoms?

Depression can affect different people in different ways which is why it can be difficult to realize when you or someone else may be suffering from the condition. One common factor though is that the individual will not be themselves or may be acting out of character.

Some common symptoms are listed below but remember not everyone will necessarily have all of these to be suffering with the condition, however having some 'red flags' can be a helpful starting point to recognizing clinical depression.

- **an unusually sad mood that does not go away;**
- **loss of enjoyment and interest in activities that used to be enjoyable;**
- **tiredness and lack of energy;**
- **loss of confidence in themselves or poor self-esteem;**
- **feeling guilty when they are not really at fault;**
- **thoughts of self-harm and/or suicide;**

- difficulty making decisions and concentrating;
- moving more slowly or becoming agitated and unable to settle;
- having difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much;
- unusual weight loss, or for some people unusual weight gain. ¹

Students Against Depression have also produced a useful poster which is public and free to download using this link: <https://www.cwmt.org.uk/recognising-depression>

Watch the videos following the links below. Which of the symptoms can you identify from the previous list?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCqm0V8nerY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NiQitBSFdDw>

How is Depression treated?

There are a range of different treatments for depression and these are sometimes combined. What they all have in common is that recovery from depression takes time and someone suffering with depression will not get better overnight regardless of the treatment plan they are following.

The NHS recommend before seeking treatment that you allow two weeks to see if things improve. If after this you are feeling the same or worse it is recommended you seek help from a healthcare professional.²

Depression which is not too severe is known as **mild to moderate depression** and there are many lifestyle changes you can make to help combat the symptoms of depression, for example healthy eating, mindfulness and exercise. These help to keep a good balance of chemicals and hormone levels in your body which can counteract the negative effects depression causes. You can find out more about this on the NHS website.

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Depression/Pages/living-with.aspx>

Moderate to severe depression will often require additional treatment which is detailed below.

Moderate to Severe Depression

There are two types of treatments for depression:

- medication;
- talking therapies.

Medication

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)

These are the most common medication prescribed and cause less side effects than other medications. They increase the amount of serotonin in your brain which often reduces when suffering from depression. Common SSRI medications include: Prozac, Cipramil, Seroxat and Lustral.

Selective-noradrenaline reuptake inhibitors (SSNIs)

Originally these were created to be better than SSRIs but there is not enough evidence to prove this. The general view is that some people respond better to SSRIs and some people respond better to SSNIs. Common SSNI medications include: Duloxetine and Venlafaxine.

¹ <http://www.mindingyourhead.info/topic/depression>

² <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Depression/Pages/Treatment.aspx>

Noradrenaline and specific serotonergic antidepressants (NASSAs)

These are similar to SSRIs but have fewer side effects concerning sexual problems. The main NASSA medication in the UK is Mirtazapine.

Tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs)

These are not very common these days and are not usually prescribed initially as they can be dangerous if too many are taken, as well as having more side effects than other medications. If they are prescribed it is usually when all other treatment has been unsuccessful and the patient is also suffering from other mental health problems.³

Talking Therapies**Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)**

CBT explores the way you deal with negative issues in your life. Through your life you will have adopted different ways of responding to hardships and challenges. Its aim is to identify negative responses to adversity and find ways to approach them with a different, more positive mind set. This enables you to have a variety of coping strategies when things go wrong in your life.

There are different forms of CBT for example you can have group sessions or even online sessions.

Interpersonal Therapy (IPT)

IPT is usually a similar approach to CBT but the focus is on relationships with others. The results from research suggest that this can be as effective as other forms of treatment for depression but more research is needed to confirm this.

Psychodynamic Psychotherapy

This talking therapy is about examining and exploring your thoughts to identify patterns of behaviour and perceptions which may exacerbate your response to difficulties.

Counselling

The difference between the above therapies and counselling is that counsellors do not try to advise you about negative thinking patterns or behaviour, but rather support you in identifying and finding them yourself and then identifying possible strategies to change your response in times of trouble and difficulty. The counsellor takes a more passive role but guides you and helps you to articulate your thoughts.

Counselling is beneficial when an individual usually has good coping mechanisms but has suffered a significant life event, such as bereavement or serious illness, and may have not encountered a problem on this scale before and therefore have not developed strategies to deal with it.⁴

What happens if it is not treated?

If depression is severe and not being treated effectively symptoms can worsen and lead to self-harm, and in extreme cases suicide.

Sometimes people can exhibit certain behaviour if their depression has escalated to this level. NHS UK include a list of warning signs on their website to be aware of:

- **making final arrangements, such as giving away possessions, making a will or saying goodbye to friends;**
- **talking about death or suicide – this may be a direct statement, such as “I wish I was dead”, but often depressed people will talk about the subject indirectly, using phrases like “I think dead people must be happier than us” or “Wouldn’t it be nice to go to sleep and never wake up”;**
- **self-harm, such as cutting their arms or legs, or burning themselves with cigarettes;**

³ <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Antidepressant-drugs/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

⁴ <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Depression/Pages/Treatment.aspx>

- a sudden lifting of mood, which could mean that a person has decided to attempt suicide and feels better because of this decision.⁵

If you are concerned someone you know may be self-harming or feel suicidal or if you feel this way yourself you should get help immediately! You can contact a GP or if this is difficult **Samaritans** is open every day, 24 hours a day. **Samaritans** is run by volunteers who will listen to you for as long as you want and you can talk to them about anything in absolute confidence.

Where to go for help?

As a society we are becoming much more aware about the consequences and prevalence of depression today. There have been many campaigns from charities and organisations to raise public awareness of this issue and to remove the stigma surrounding depression so that people can openly discuss what has previously been a taboo topic of conversation.

This means there is now no reason for people to suffer in silence, as there are many places you can find help and advice for you or someone you know. Below is a list of helpful websites and organisations which offer a range of support from general advice and information to being able to speak to someone in real time.

<http://studentsagainstdepression.org/> – Students against Depression website which has an excellent range of resources for everything concerning depression.

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/mental-health-northern-ireland-fundamental-facts>

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/FF16%20Northern%20ireland.pdf> – Mental Health Foundation website with downloadable PDF with statistics and information about mental health in Northern Ireland.

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<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/health-and-wellbeing/mental-health> – How to access mental health services in Northern Ireland.

⁵ <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Depression/Pages/living-with.aspx>

<http://www.samaritans.org/about-us/our-organisation/read-our-publications/young-peoples-emotional-health-resource> – Samaritans webpage for young people and those who work with them.

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<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Depression/Pages/Introduction.aspx> – NHS website with medical information about depression, causes and treatment.

Tasks and Activities

1. To make sure you are aware of the issues concerning depression visit the following page and complete the 10 module course using the workbook and worksheets provided.

<http://studentsagainstdespression.org/take-action/take-action-in-your-own-life/>

2. Visit the following websites and make a note of 5 statistics concerning depression and mental health.

<https://www.healthni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dhssps/hscims-2015-key-facts.pdf>

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/mental-health-northern-ireland-fundamental-facts>

3. Watch the two videos made by students to increase awareness of depression. In groups devise your own idea for a short film. What would you include and why? What would you want to know as a young person? If you have time you could even produce your film.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCqm0V8nerY> – **We All Have Problems** Mental Health Awareness Film about depression made by young people.

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4. Visit the website below and make a note of five places a young person could get help for depression in Northern Ireland.

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/health-and-wellbeing/mental-health>

5. Role play –

- Imagine you have a friend who confides to you that they are feeling low and think they may be depressed. What advice would you give them and how would you support them.

- You have noticed that a friend of yours is behaving oddly and you are worried they may be self-harming or thinking suicidal thoughts. What do you do?
 - You realise that you are not feeling yourself and are finding it hard to cope. You want help to get better but are finding it hard to tell anyone. Using the sources in the **Where to go for help** section try to find at least three sources of help you could use which would make it easier to talk to someone about how you are feeling.
6. Visit the NHS website and find out more about the different treatments available to manage depression. <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Depression/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Complete the table below:

Treatment	What is it?	Advantages	Disadvantages

