



Hello again,

Firstly thank you so much for all of the lovely feedback after the first issue of Wellbeing Matters was dispatched for your perusal. I was so pleased to hear how helpful many of you found it and much appreciate your kind words.

Some of you may have noticed that there has been a longer than hoped for gap between the first and second issue of Wellbeing Matters – unfortunately I was really poorly for a couple of months but I am pleased to be feeling a little stronger and to be getting back to usual.

Of course writing always helps, even when the subject area is one which many find a difficult area to think about for so many different reasons. This month, I am considering Depression – what it is, the different types, the symptoms, thinking about caring for ourselves and others, as well as what support is available.

I hope you find this article helpful in both thinking of your own needs as well as others.

Thinking about Depression

We all have times where we feel miserable or low, however these usually pass after a short while.

Where these feelings do not pass after a couple of weeks, or if they come and go repeatedly over a longer period of time, it could be that depression is the cause. It is therefore very important to see a doctor, should this be the case for you.



Depression is a low mood which lasts for a longer period of time and affects many, if not all, aspects of everyday life. At its' mildest end, depression can mean feeling in low spirits, and whilst it doesn't interfere with living life it can involve everything feeling just that little bit harder to do, and perhaps even less worthwhile.

At the most severe end, depression can become life threatening due to feelings of suicide, or of feeling such hopelessness that the will to live is lost.

When diagnosed by a doctor, depression tends to be described within different levels, as well as types. Mild, moderate or severe depression will be used to reflect the current impact your symptoms are having upon you, and will also form part of the outcome concerning which type of treatment is offered. It is worth mentioning here, however, that one period of depression can incorporate all of these levels of depression, as well as to say that different levels of depression can be experienced across different episodes.

There are many different types of depression, including reactive depression -where a trauma has occurred and caused an episode of depression, SAD (seasonal affective disorder) – where the depression usually (both not always) occurs during the winter, dysthymia, or chronic depression – where a continuous mild depression is experienced for two years or more, and post-natal depression – where



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depression is experienced in the months after becoming a parent and can affect men as well as women.

These are just a few examples of depression – there are many more – and, given this, determining symptoms is also a very long list. However, there are some commonly experienced symptoms which are experienced widely by those of us experiencing depression, and include:

- Feeling down, upset or tearful
- Feeling restless, agitated or irritable
- Feeling guilty or worthless
- Feeling empty or numb
- Feeling tired, emotionless or unconnected to life around you
- Feeling isolated or unable to relate to others
- Finding no joy in life, or in activities you would previously have enjoyed
- Feeling a decrease in self-confidence or self esteem
- Feeling hopeless or despairing
- Feeling a need to self-harm, or experiencing an increase in self-harming behaviours
- Feeling suicidal

It is very important at this stage to note that, should you be experiencing thoughts of suicide, or you are using self-harming behaviours to manage difficult thoughts, or you know someone who is, it is very important to seek help and support. An ambulance can be called if you need immediate help, or you can present in A&E, as both will have access to mental health

professionals who can come and explore these difficult feelings with you.

Alternatively, if you need urgent support but you are not at immediate risk of harming yourself, you can call your GP to ask for an urgent appointment, or alternatively call the Samaritans on 116 123 to talk through your feelings.

In terms of ongoing self-care during an episode of low mood, there are a range of different things which may help including:

- A short walk each day, or, if this feels too much, spending time in your garden or sitting in a local park can be helpful, but try to keep active
- Trying to regulate your day a little, such as having a simple task for the morning after breakfast, and one for the afternoon, after lunch
- Trying to eat little and often, if appetite is affected
- Trying to get an adequate amount of sleep at night, or to spend time relaxing in bed if sleep is difficult, even if you are reading
- Try to look after your hygiene as best you can
- Avoid drugs and alcohol, as both are mood suppressants
- Try to treat yourself for small achievements – be kind to yourself as much as you can





Should you be caring for someone who appears depressed, the following things may be helpful:

- Firstly, and always, don't judge the person for experiencing what they are, and display care as much as you are able
- Ask the person if there is anything you can do to help, but do not persist if they are unsure. It is better to return to the question at another time than for the person to feel overwhelmed
- Offer to support by listening carefully, and offering to just simply be there for them – sometimes company is what helps
- Invite the person to join you in activities you know they used to enjoy
- Encourage the person not to put off important activities, and, even better, do the activity with them
- Encourage the person to do something every day that they enjoy
- Encourage the person to try relaxation methods such as walking, deep breathing and other forms of gentle exercise
- Keep yourself well and healthy, as this will be really important at this time
- Encourage the person to make an appointment with their doctor and offer to go along for support
- Take comments of self-harm and suicide seriously and seek professional advice, however also do not meet these voiced comments with irritation, high levels of anxiety or impatience. It takes a great deal of courage to talk of feelings such as this.

And again, listen, listen, listen.

Useful contacts

In addition to the list of resources within the Diocesan pastoral care pages, you can also contact:

www.bigwhitewall.com Online community for adults experiencing emotional distress. Free in many areas, if you are a student or if you have a referral from your GP

www.depressionuk.org Self-help organisation made up of individuals and organisations

www.elefriends.org.uk Friendly supportive online community for people experiencing mental health difficulties

The NHS (www.nhs.uk) also offer information on treatments available on the NHS for depression.

www.samaritans.org 24 hour helpline and information for people who are struggling to cope.

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