



MENTAL HEALTH BEGINS WITH ME: Understanding and Managing depression

**KZN COUNSELLING AND CAREER
DEVELOPMENT**

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Define tomorrow.

UNISA



Percentage of College Students Experiencing:

Depression

50%



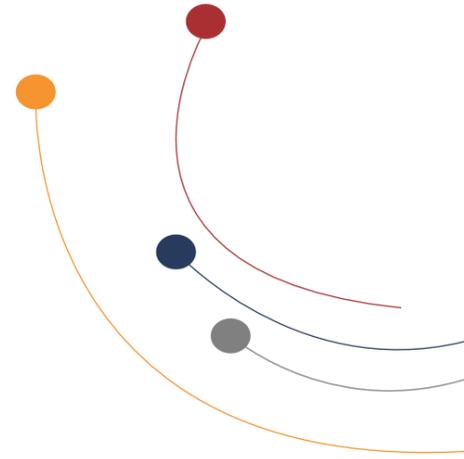
Anxiety

80%



OBJECTIVES

1. To create awareness and understanding of depression as a physical *and* mental illness
2. Share information about depression, its causes and its treatment.
3. Learn when and where to access help



STATISTICS

- Depression does not discriminate - cuts across gender, class, race, and ethnicity.
- Women are twice as likely than men to suffer from depression.
- At least 20% of South Africans will experience depression at least once in their lifetime.
- 70% who attempt suicide have a mental disorder.
- Research has shown that as many as 12% of South African students experience moderate to severe depressive symptoms(SADAG).

STATISTICS

Why do we
need to talk
about
depression?!



- Known as the silent killer
- Depression is one of the most prevalent of Mental disorders in SA
- According to the WHO, depression is the 4th leading cause of disability
- In South Africa about 23 reported suicides per day – that equates to about 8000 per year in South Africa alone
- For every person who commits suicide, 10 attempt it.

Understanding depression

- What is depression?
- How is it different from grief?
- Types of depression
- Symptoms of depression
- Causes of depression
- Management of depression



WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

- A mental and physical health disorder causes significant impairment in daily life
- Depression is not the same as ordinary sadness - a serious, debilitating mental illness.
- Depression is a "whole-body" illness, involving your body, mood, and thoughts.
- It affects the way you eat and sleep, the way you feel about yourself, and the way you think about things.
- Can co-exist with grief

Mental pain is less dramatic than physical pain and also more hard to bear. The frequent attempt to conceal mental pain increases the burden. It is easier to say, "My tooth is aching" than to say, "My heart is broken"
- Healthyplace.com

Types of depression

- Major depression
- Persistent depressive disorder
- Bipolar Mood disorder
- Psychotic depression
- Seasonal affective disorder
- Postpartum depression



Determined by:

1. Intensity of the symptoms.
2. Duration of the symptoms.
3. Specific cause of the symptoms, if unknown.



Symptoms of depression

*Changes
in
Thinking*

*Changes
in
Feeling*

*Changes
in
Behavior*

*Changes
in
Physical
Well-
being*

Symptoms of depression: *Changes in Thinking*

- Poor attention span - unable to concentrate, difficulty with decision making.
- Impairments short term memory – becoming forgetful
- Negative thoughts and thinking are characteristic of depression.
- Some people have self-destructive thoughts during a more serious depression.
- Poor self-esteem, excessive guilt and self-criticism are all common.

Symptoms of depression: Changes *in Feeling*

- You may feel sad for no reason at all.
- No longer enjoy activities that were found pleasurable.
- Lack motivation/apathetic.
- Feeling "slowed down" and tired all the time.
- Irritability/ Difficulty in controlling your temper.
- At the extreme end will have feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.

Symptoms of depression: *Changes in Behaviour*

- Social withdrawal /avoidance
- Acting out anger/temper outbursts.
- Decreased libido/Sexual desire may disappear, resulting in lack of sexual activity.
- In the extreme, people may neglect their personal appearance, even neglecting basic hygiene.

Symptoms of depression: *Changes in Physical Well-being*

- Chronic fatigue
- Insomnia - lie awake for hours, or awaken many times during the night, and stare at the ceiling.
- Hypersomnia - sleep many hours, even most of the day, and still feel tired.
- Loss of appetite
- Complaints of headaches, unexplained body aches/pains.

Symptoms of Depression



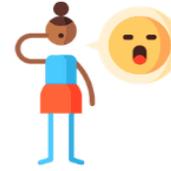
Experiencing 5 or more of the following symptoms for >2 weeks may indicate a depressive disorder



Feeling sad, guilty or helpless



Reduced sense of self-worth



Loss of interest in activities



Insomnia or excessive sleeping



Digestive problems



Physical aches



Changes in weight or appetite



Trouble focusing and making decisions



Restlessness



Pessimism



Irritability



Suicidal thoughts or attempts

Symptoms of Bipolar Disorder



Mania



Euphoria



Abnormally upbeat,
jumpy or wired



Poor decision
making



Unusual
talkativeness



Distractability



Decreased
need for sleep



Racing
thoughts



Increased activity,
energy or agitation

Depression



Feeling sad, empty
or hopeless



Changes
in weight



Loss of interest
in activities



Insomnia or
excessive sleeping



Trouble
focusing



Feeling guilty
or worthless



Restlessness or
slowed behaviour



Fatigue or
lethargy



Suicidal thoughts
or attempts

Grief vs Depression

- Grief has several symptoms in common with the symptoms of major depressive disorder, including: Intense sadness, insomnia, poor appetite, weight loss
- Grief can turn into complicated grief- person may engage in self-destructive behaviors or even contemplate or attempt suicide.
- Where grief and depression differ is that grief tends to **decrease over time** and occurs in **waves** that are triggered by thoughts or reminders of the deceased

Causes of depression

- **Imbalance in brain chemistry** Often there are changes in the amounts of brain chemicals (neurotransmitters) that play a role in the neural circuits of the brain responsible for maintaining mood stability – Serotonin, Dopamine
- **Genetic inheritance** Predisposition to depression and/or mental illness. Blood relatives with a history of depression, bipolar mood disorder, schizophrenia, alcoholism, or suicide
- **Substance abuse** can trigger feelings of loneliness and sadness associated with depression. Can co-occur with depression, relationship is bi-directional

Causes of depression

- **Individual factors:** There are certain physical changes within the brains of people with depression. The significance of these is still under research.
- **Environmental factors/ Life events & experiences-**death, divorce, loss, financial problems
- **Health conditions & hormonal changes** – childbirth, menopause

Sometimes not an obvious reason

Factors that increase the risk of developing or triggering depression

- Traumatic or stressful life events (e.g. divorce, infidelity, death or loss of romantic or even business relationship)
- Rape, physical or sexual abuse, a difficult or chaotic childhood
- Terminal illness
- COVID-19/lockdown and associated losses
- Poor coping skills
- Persistent family or relationship difficulties (alcohol abuse, domestic violence, sibling rivalry, divorce, financial problems);
- Lack of a consistent support system



**MANAGEMENT
OF
DEPRESSION**

Medication

- While medication does not cure depression, it helps to manage the symptoms and may make other treatments such as psychotherapy more effective.
- The effectiveness of medication can vary depending on an individual's situation and bodily response to it.
- Some medications may have **side effects**, but there are many ways to reduce it such as changing the dosage, changing the time of medication administration, or how you take the medication

Counselling/Psychotherapy

Sometimes people have problems coping on their own and they seek professional help - counselling, lifeline counsellor or clinical psychologist

Once diagnosed, if severe and warranting more intense treatment, referred to a psychiatrist for medication

Your counsellor may use a variety of techniques and different therapies to help you, most effective being CBT

we're all in this together

- Many people affected by events such as a pandemic, will experience psychological distress.
- Distress can result in negative views of:

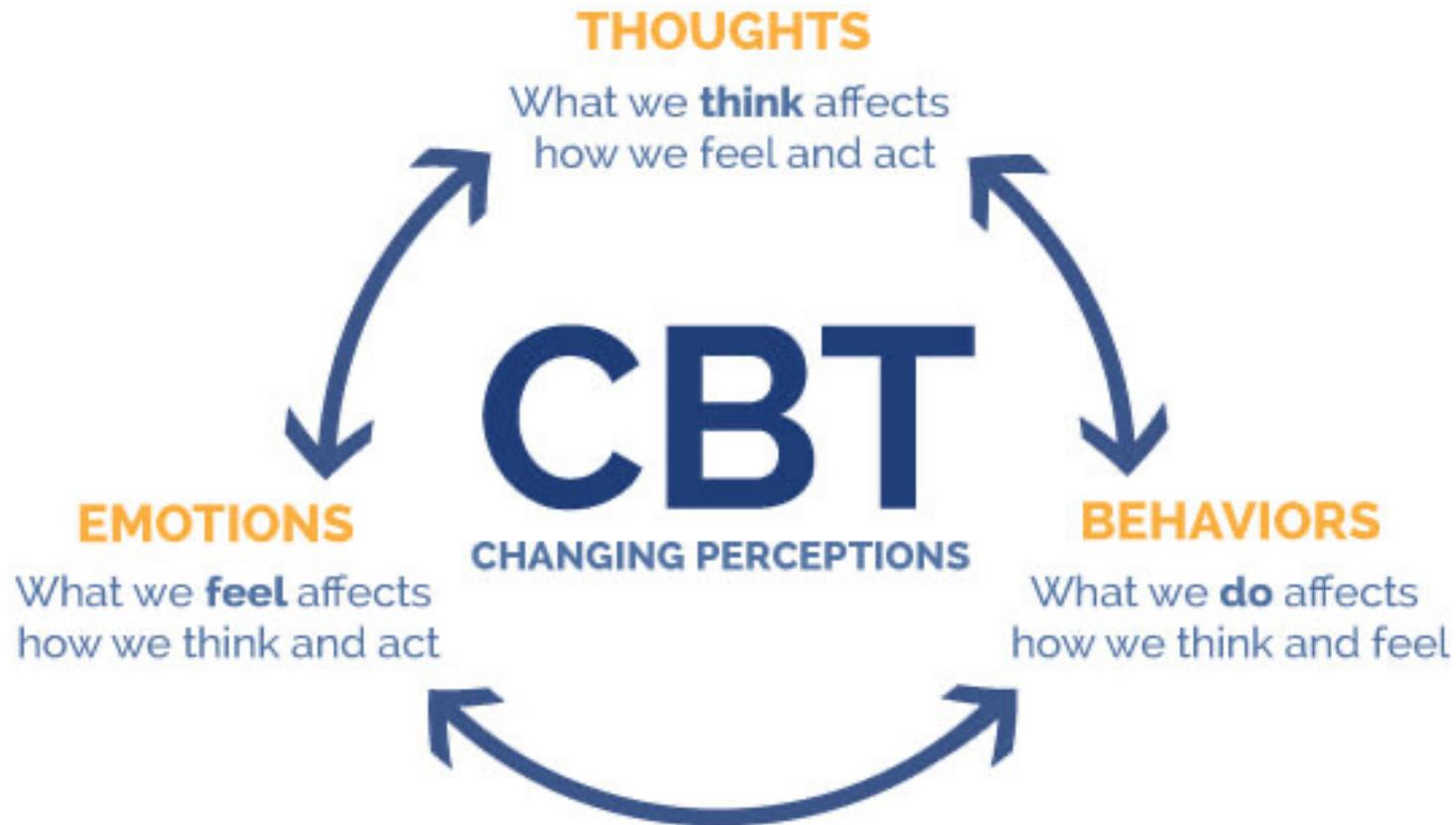
→ The environment

→ Others

→ Self

DEPRESSION

Cognitive behaviour Therapy



- Structured
- Time-limited
- Problem-focused
- Goal oriented

Problem-Based coping

- There are two main types of coping skills: problem-based coping and emotion-based coping.
- When you're feeling distressed, ask yourself, "Do I need to change my situation or do I need to find a way to better cope with the situation?"
- **Problem-based coping** is helpful when you need to change your situation, by removing a stressful thing from your life.

Emotion-focussed coping

- **Emotion-based coping** is helpful when you need to take care of your feelings when you either don't want to change your situation or when circumstances are out of your control.
- There isn't always one best way to proceed. Instead, it's up to you to decide which type of coping skill is likely to work best for you in your particular circumstance.

Radical acceptance

- Everyone experiences pain in life - natural occurrence.
- RA Means to accept your reality - accept things outside of your control- understand that pain and suffering is part of life - the more you resist –by not accepting reality, pain turns into suffering
- How we choose to deal with pain has a significant impact on our overall well-being. Suffering does not come from pain – but from our attachment to Pain!
- Non-attachment is pivotal to overcoming suffering
- The more you prolong suffering – causes ongoing distress =
Cycle of suffering

Radical acceptance

- When you accept you cannot change or undo it – stop fighting reality, you will stop responding with impulsive or destructive behaviors when things aren't going the way you want them to and let go of bitterness that may be keeping you trapped in a cycle of suffering.
- People feel stuck when they chose to do nothing about their pain and suffering and/or use unhealthy coping habits rather than accepting pain as is.

Turning the Mind

- Choosing between continuous suffering or acceptance
- Acceptance is not accepting the situation, choosing to **END the suffering**;
- Emotions like anger, bitterness, or thinking “why me?” are indicators of non-acceptance.
- We must make an inner commitment to accept reality as it is.
- When we accept emotional pain, it decreases



How to stop being relentlessly self-critical

- Stop paying attention to your inner critic
- Set reasonable expectations
- Stop comparing yourself to others
- Learn to love yourself with all of your flaws, your whole being
- Practice being kind to yourself
- Give your self permission to be happy
- Make an effort to remember you are enough



Practice self-compassion

- With self-compassion, we give ourselves the same kindness and care we'd give to a good friend (Neff, K)
- Mindfulness allows us to be empathic which is the seed of compassion
- It is human to suffer – mindfulness is a way to reduce our suffering- **SUFFERING IS A CHOICE, PAIN ISNT!!!**
- Acknowledge how you feel and allow it to have its space. Do something that brings you comfort
- Self-sabotage e.g.: procrastination, self-medication with drugs or alcohol, comfort eating, and forms of self-injury such as cutting.

Self-care:

taking good care of your physical, spiritual and emotional health can go a long way in your recovery



- **Diet:** Limit intake of caffeine, alcohol, drugs and nicotine - stabilise moods and reduce dependence on such substances.
- **Social connection:** remain connected with friends/family
- **Exercise:** produces “happy hormones” known as endorphins that help to lift moods and relieve stress.
- **Sleep** –beneficial to mental health- having a mental condition can reduce our sleep quality and quantity, resulting in a downward spiral

Things you can do other than focus on your problems

- Meditating, Yoga
- Going for a walk/walk your dogs, swim
- Read motivational books
- Take care of your body in a way that makes you feel good (paint your nails, do your hair, put on a face mask)
- Use progressive muscle relaxation
- Write in a journal
- Activity scheduling= sense of mastery

Practice positive affirmations

- I am valued even when I am not productive.
- I am loved despite my sadness.
- I am appreciated even when I can't contribute much.
- I am needed even though I feel worthless
- I am not my depression
- My discomfort won't last forever.
- I am strong in my weakness.

Digital self-help apps

- 1. Sanvello** – Self-help and self-care for anxiety, stress, and depression based on CBT and mindfulness tools. (Free)
- 2. HeadSpace** – Guided meditations to help with anxiety, depression, sleep troubles, focus, and basic mindful practice. (Free to download with option to subscribe)

“I am bent, but not broken. I am scarred, but not disfigured. I am sad, but not hopeless. I am tired, but not powerless. I am angry, but not bitter. I am depressed, but not giving up.”

~Unknown

Unisa Counselling and Career Development:

During office hours: 7:45-16:00

0313358819

counsellingkzn@unisa.ac.za

Book an online counselling session using our online booking system:

<https://tinyurl.com/mtr3xyks>

AFTER HOURS SUPPORT

Lifeline call
centre: 0861
322 322

SADAG
Emergency call
line: 0800 567
567

24hr Helpline:
0800 12 13 14

Lifeline Durban:
031 312 23 23

REFERENCES

- <https://www.homage.sg/health/mental-health/>
- www.sadag.org