



EU funds  
for Malta  
2014-2020

# DEPRESSION

IN YOUNG PEOPLE

What you need to know

[ankrayouth.org](http://ankrayouth.org)



# Depression in young people

**While we all feel sad, moody or low from time to time, some people experience these feelings intensely, for long periods of time (weeks, months or even years) and sometimes without any apparent reason. Depression affects how you feel about yourself and makes life more difficult to manage from day to day. The encouraging news is that there are a range of treatments, health professionals and services available to help with depression, as well as information on what you can do to help yourself.**

## How do you know if you have depression?

You may be depressed if, for more than two weeks, you've felt sad, down or miserable most of the time, or have lost interest or pleasure in usual activities, and have also experienced several of the signs and symptoms across the three categories listed below. It's important to remember that we all experience some of these symptoms sometimes and it may not necessarily mean you're depressed. Equally, not everyone who is experiencing depression will have all of these symptoms. The symptoms below will not provide a diagnosis – for that you'll need to see a health professional – but they can help to guide you and provide a better understanding of how you're feeling.

### Behaviour

- Not going out anymore
- Not getting things done at work/school
- Withdrawing from close family and friends
- Relying on alcohol and sedatives
- Not doing usual enjoyable activities
- Unable to concentrate

### Feelings

- Overwhelmed
- Guilty
- Irritable, frustrated
- Lacking in confidence, indecisive

- Disappointed
- Pessimistic
- Sad, miserable

### Thoughts

- "I'm a failure."
- "It's my fault."
- "Nothing good ever happens to me."
- "I'm worthless."
- "Life's not worth living."
- "People would be better off without me."

### Physical

- Tired all the time
- Sick and run down
- Headaches and muscle pains
- Churning gut
- Sleep problems
- Loss or change of appetite
- Significant weight loss or gain

## What are the different types of depression?

There are different types of depressive disorders. Symptoms can range from relatively minor (but still disabling) through to very severe, so it's helpful to be aware of the range of conditions and their specific symptoms. Some of them include: Major Depression (Melancholia; Psychotic Depression; Antenatal and Postnatal depression) and Bipolar Disorder.

## Why do people develop depression?

While we don't know exactly what causes depression, a number of things are often linked to its development. Depression usually results from a combination of recent events and other longer-term or personal factors, rather than one immediate issue or event. Factors such as genetic vulnerability, severe life stressors, substances you may take (some medications, drugs and alcohol) and medical conditions can affect the way your brain regulates your moods.

## Treatments for Depression

Different types of depression require different types of treatment. This may include physical exercise for preventing and treating mild depression, through to psychological and medical treatment for more severe symptoms. There are a range of treatments to help, but it's different for everybody.

One main treatment is psychological therapies (talking therapies). Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), dialectical behavioural therapy (DBT), interpersonal therapy and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy are considered particularly effective therapies. The important thing to remember is that a solution can be found when you speak about what you are experiencing and ask for help.

## Strengthen your body, mind and relationships

### 1. Making healthy choices

When you are not feeling well it is easy to let the basics such as eating, sleeping and keeping active slip. Having a healthy lifestyle helps to improve your energy levels, helps you think more clearly and helps build your confidence and overall sense of wellbeing. Setting yourself some small achievable goals is also really helpful to your recovery.

### 2. Healthy diet

What you eat not only affects your physical health; it affects your energy levels and the way you think and feel about yourself.

### 3. Keep active

Being physically active improves your strength, fitness and confidence. Keeping active can help you to sleep better while also improving your ability to manage intense emotions, like anger or fear.

### 4. Reduce stress

- Connect with people at community events to help to feel a sense of belonging.
- Talk openly with your friends and family about how you feel.
- Learn to relax. This might be



listening to music or going for a run, or you might benefit from meditating, or doing guided relaxation.

- Get organised. Plan when you will do your work/study/jobs to ensure you have time get it all done.

### **5. Avoid or limit drug and alcohol use**

Drug use has negative effects on how you feel and what you think – even if the short-term effects are appealing

### **6. Develop a regular sleeping pattern**

Sleep is important for our bodies to recover and recharge. Without sleep you will also have problems with your energy levels.

### **7. Hobbies, work, school and university**

Having things to do that are both interesting and rewarding can significantly improve your mood. Keeping linked in with work, university and school also provides you with a sense of purpose and confidence.

### **8. Strengthening relationships**

Friends, family and your community are a really important part of your health and wellbeing.

**Get professional help early if you think you're experiencing depression. Your symptoms may not go away on their own and if left untreated, they can start to take over your life.**



ANKRA is a project set up by Richmond for young people affected by mental health problems in Malta.

We are here to provide help, information and support.

**Helpline: 1770**  
**Helpchat: [www.oli.chat](http://www.oli.chat)**  
**[info@ankrayouth.org](mailto:info@ankrayouth.org)**  
**[ankrayouth.org](http://ankrayouth.org)**

## **Useful support:**

### **[www.oli.chat](http://www.oli.chat)**

Richmond's free, 24/7 webchat offering emotional support and practical guidance.

### **[kellimni.com](http://kellimni.com)**

A free, 24/7 support service managed by SOS Malta.

### **Aġenzija Żgħażaġh**

Provides youths with a safe space to express views, needs and concerns.

### **Youth in Focus Service**

Provides social work intervention to adolescents and young persons.

