

# the stats and facts about depression

- Approximately one in five young people in Australia will experience depression
- Girls report higher rates of depression than boys - 15% vs. 9%
- Up to 40% of young people experience a depressed mood in any six-month period, which puts them at risk of major depression
- Approximately 3% of young people experience a major depressive disorder (severe depression) at any point in time
- While girls are more likely to think about suicide than boys (14% vs. 10%), boys are more likely to make a serious suicide attempt than girls (1.2% vs. 0.5%)
- Less than 60% of young people experiencing depression seek help from a mental health professional
- When asked, young people gave the following reasons why they don't seek help for their mental health problems:
  - Prefer to manage their own problems (38%)
  - Think nothing can help (17%)
  - Don't know where to get help (17%)
  - Worried about what other people would think (14%)



Up to 40% of young people experience a depressed mood in any six-month period

## WHAT CAUSES DEPRESSION?

It's not easy to say what causes depression. Sometimes it can start because of a difficult situation in your life—like ongoing bullying at school, family or relationship breakups, sexual or physical abuse, arguments or the death of someone close to you.

Young people who experience a head injury, epilepsy or cancer can also be at risk of depression.

Sometimes it's a combination of many things over a period of several years.

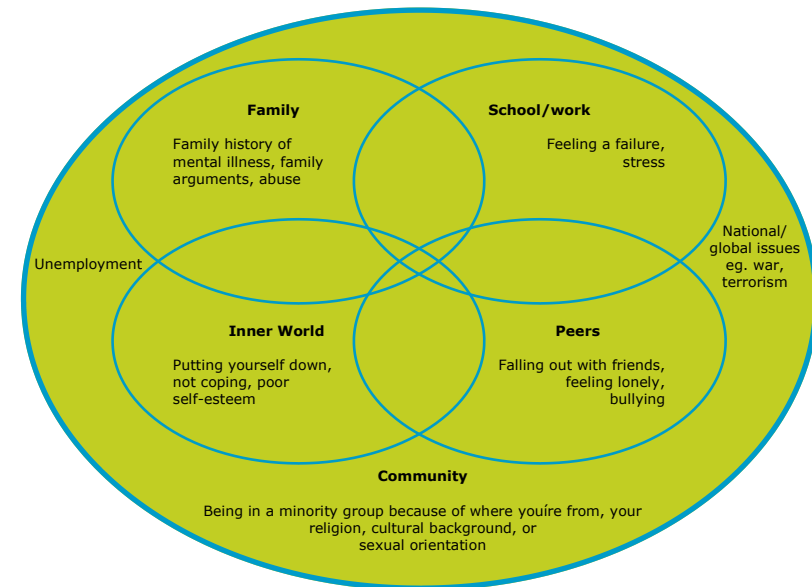
Sometimes depression occurs for no obvious reason.

Regardless of what causes depression, it is a very real illness that requires detection, treatment and a plan to get through it.

On the next page we've included a diagram which shows a lot of different things which can cause depression—things that happen in your community, at school, at work, and things that happen inside our heads.

*"When I look at my life, it's been a good one. My parents love me, we're pretty well off, I have an education, I've never taken drugs, I've got friends... I look at all this and think, so why, why am I depressed?"* **Rae**

## HOW PROBLEMS CAN OVERLAP TO CAUSE DEPRESSION



## SOURCE

John Court, Centre for Adolescent Health, University of Melbourne

## ARE YOU AT RISK?

As the diagram above shows, depression can be caused by a number of overlapping things that are going on in your world—at home, at school or work, with your friends, in your community, even inside your head. However, there are certain things that will put you more at risk of experiencing depression.

## Hard times

Hard times, such as the loss of someone close to you, may lead to depression. Difficult experiences as a young person, may make you more likely to experience depression if other things go wrong when you're an adult. However, studies show that hard times are not the only cause of depression.

## School, work and family

If you feel you're doing badly at work or school this can sometimes lead to depression. At the same time, depression may affect how you're going at work or school.

If you're being abused, if you're being bullied, and/or if you don't feel you have someone to talk to, you may be at a higher risk of developing depression.

Family relationships also have an impact—negative experiences with your family, especially when you were a kid, can increase the risk.

If one or both of your parents have depression, your chance of also experiencing depression is higher, especially if you're a girl. At the same time, if you've got a family history of depression, that doesn't mean for certain that you'll experience depression too.

### PERSONAL RISK FACTORS FOR DEPRESSION

Sometimes individual factors—things like personality, genes, hormones—can make a person more likely to experience depression. For example, if you're a worrier or a perfectionist, if you're shy or lacking in self-esteem, you may be more likely to develop depression at some time in your life, than if you are confident and outgoing. Same thing if you're hard on yourself about how you're getting on with others or how you're doing at school, university or work.

Negative thinking and stressing about your problems all the time can lead to depression and stop you getting better.

Drugs and alcohol don't help when you're going through a difficult time. Most of them act as 'depressants', which means you'll feel worse in the long run.

### THE GOOD NEWS

The good news is there's a lot of things that can help prevent you from getting depressed. Or if you've experienced depression in the past, the good news is there's a lot of things you can do to stay healthy.

It helps if you're:

- Getting enough sleep (see the **getting the sleep you need** factsheet).
- Staying fit and healthy (see the **getting active to beat depression** factsheet).
- Having balance in your life between school, work, university and time out with your family and friends (see the **dealing with stress** factsheet).
- Spending time and staying connected with people you like and trust.
- Learning some useful skills, such as how to problem solve, how to stay optimistic during hard times, how to communicate better and different ways to deal with difficult situations so you can cope better when they happen. (see the **getting things sorted** factsheet)

### SOURCES

- Burns et al. (2002). Depression in young people: what causes it and how can we prevent it? Medical Journal of Australia. Available at: [http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/177\_07\_071002/bur10371\_fm.pdf]
- National Health and Medical Research Committee. (1997). Depression in young people: clinical practice guidelines. Available at: [http://www.health.gov.au/nhmrc/publications/pdf/cp37.pdf]
- Sawyer et al. (2000). The National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: the child and adolescent component. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION ON DEPRESSION

beyondblue: the national depression initiative [www.beyondblue.org.au]

beyondblue exists to provide information and promote awareness about depression. On the beyondblue website you can complete interactive checklists to see if you might have depression or anxiety, download factsheets, read personal experiences and much more.

### The OzHelp Foundation

1300 OZHELP (1300 694 357)

www.ozhelp.org.au

### BeyondBlue

For information about depression, anxiety and related drug and alcohol problems visit [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au) or call the *beyondblue: the national depression initiative* info line on 1300 22 4636