

ADF MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING
DEPRESSION



JOINT HEALTH COMMAND
VICE CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCE



What is Depression?

Depression is a word we often use to describe our feelings or moods. Most of us will feel 'down', 'blue', 'fed-up' or 'sad' from time to time. Such feelings are a normal part of the emotional ups and downs of everyday life.

In fact, feelings like these are useful because they may help you realise that you need to do something constructive to deal with the feelings or to change the situation.

Depression is quite different to everyday feelings of sadness or a case of the 'blues'. It lasts longer and is accompanied by feelings of helplessness and hopelessness of an intensity that has a strong negative effect on your day-to-day life. Depression is not only about feelings or emotions, it also affects the way you think and behave.

It is important to understand the difference between depression and the feelings of sadness that we all may experience when we have been through a painful or difficult time (like the death of a loved one).

As an example, the feelings associated with grief can be intense and long lasting but they can also help the person adjust and develop new meaning in their life after the loss.

Depression on the other hand does not do this. Depression does not provide us with personal growth and development – it can actually rob us of those very things.

Family, friends and colleagues may seem frustrated and critical, suggesting that you just 'snap out of it'. This probably won't be helpful, but your family and friends, just like you, need to know that depression can be treated successfully and that they can help you in your recovery.

Don't be afraid to talk about your feelings; letting people know how you feel can be the first step on the road to recovery from depression. Remember, depression is an illness, not a choice.

What are the signs?

Depression can present with a range of signs or symptoms, some of which can include:

- loss of interest in pleasurable and fun activities
- a lack of joy in your life
- feeling sad or irritable most of the time
- changes in sleeping patterns
- worrying
- negative thinking
- feeling unworthy or helpless, as if you are a burden to others
- feeling tired all the time
- everything feels like a major effort.

It is often the relentless feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, guilt and anxiety accompanying depression that make it so difficult to cope with. Some of these signs can be frightening, particularly if you think about death or suicide. It is important to make sure you talk about these feelings and find a different solution or answer to your pain.

“What can I do?”

If you or someone you know can identify with these signs or feelings, please seek help straight away. Be open and frank about how you feel. Depression can be treated and help is available - you do not have to go through this alone. There are a variety of ways to deal with depression, speak to a health professional and find out what type of treatment is suitable for your personal situation.

Where to seek help

If you or someone you know can identify with these signs or feelings, please seek help straight away.

Your chain of command is a primary resource that can provide advice, referral and support. You can also contact your local on base Health Centre, Chaplain, Mental Health Professional, or the Duty Officer/Officer of the Day. Talk to these people and be open and frank about how you feel.

The **ADF Mental Health All-hours Support Line** (ASL) is a confidential telephone service for ADF members and their families available 24/7 on **1800 628 036** or if calling from overseas +61 2 9425 3878.

If you are away from base, or for out-of-hours assistance, you can call **1800 IMSICK** to locate the nearest support.

Chaplains are connected to all units in Australia and can provide support and appropriate referrals.

The **ADF Health and Wellbeing Portal**
www.defence.gov.au/health/healthportal/

The Portal is an online health information resource tool for all current and ex-serving ADF Members and their families.

Other Resources

Defence Family Helpline (1800 624 608)

www.defence.gov.au/dco

The Defence Family Helpline is your first point of call for support, information and connection with your community. The Helpline is available 24/7 for ADF Members and their families, and is staffed by qualified human services professionals including social workers and psychologists.

You can also email the Helpline on DefenceFamilyHelpline@defence.gov.au and receive a response within 24 hours.

Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VCS).

This 24-hour service is available to veterans of all deployments and their families on **1800 011 046**.