

Tool kit

Help when you are feeling down

A self-help resource for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are feeling down

Lifeline's 'Help when you are feeling down' tool kit provides information about:

- Keeping a balanced life
- Understanding what depression is
- What we can do to feel better
- Places to go for help now

Keeping a balanced life

Life is about keeping in balance. It is about balance between the good things and the strengths in our lives and the not so good things that worry us.

When we get out of balance and the worries take over, we can get depressed and feel sad and down inside.

Feeling down can mean that we:

- feel sad or miserable
- think that we can't cope
- feel angry or irritable all the time
- feel like we don't enjoy anything anymore
- feel like we don't want to be around other people
- think that life is not worth living
- think about hurting ourselves

Physical signs can include:

- not eating properly
- not sleeping well
- not wanting to get out of bed
- crying for no reason

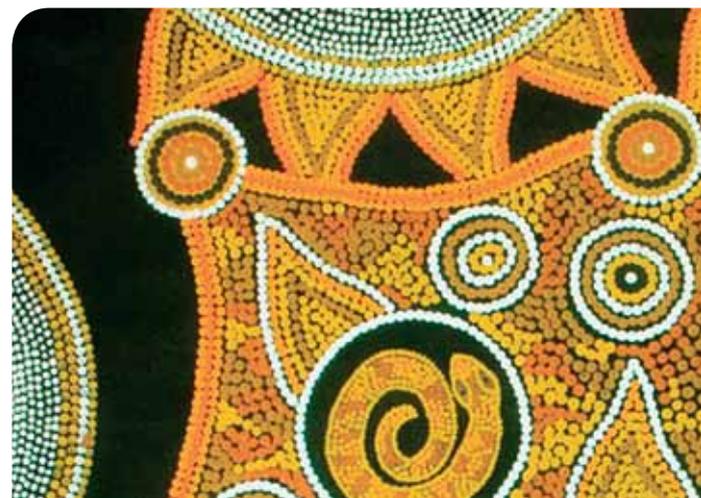
If we have any of these thoughts or feelings or show any of these physical signs, we may have depression.

Understanding what depression is

Depression is an illness that can affect us in the ways listed above. There are many types of depression and many different ways to get back to our old self again.

We don't have to put up with feeling like this. We can talk to trusted friends or family and think about going to talk with someone at our local health centre or Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Service, so that we can get the help that's right for us.

Talking about our worries and sadness is the most important step toward getting strong again. Even if it turns out that you don't have depression, they can still help you get back on top of things.





What can I do to feel better?

1 Talk to someone

Talking to other people is a great first step to getting better when we are feeling sad and down. We can talk to a friend, family member, an elder, counsellor, or an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker. We can also go for help to our local health centre, our GP, or our Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Service. Sharing with the right person always helps.

2 Do more exercise

Exercise is a very good treatment for depression, sadness and worry. We can think about joining the local sports club. Think about doing more walking during the day. We can ask our local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Service about activities or groups they might be running. Activities might include going out bush or doing something in town. Other good exercise activities might be swimming, bike riding, going to the gym or going hunting and fishing.

3 Do something that makes us feel good

It is easy to forget to do things we enjoy when we are feeling down. Doing more things that we enjoy can help us to feel better. We can try to do something that makes us feel good every day. Everyone enjoys different things: like visiting friends and family, listening to music, drawing or painting, reading, dancing, and learning new skills. We can think about finding out what's happening in the community, join a community group, and getting involved in something we are interested in.

4 Try to get a good sleep

A good sleep is important and helps us to feel okay for the next day. It is often hard to sleep well when you are feeling down. We need to try to get into a regular pattern of going to bed and getting up at around the same time each day. We also need to try to avoid drinking caffeine drinks like coffee, coke or other sport drinks in the evening. Eating big meals and heavy workouts can also keep us awake so they are best avoided in the evening too.

7 Get a full check-up from your doctor

It can help to talk to our doctor about how we have been feeling and what has been happening in our life that might be causing us worry and sadness. Sometimes depression and sadness is linked with physical health problems like diabetes or kidney trouble. It is important for our doctor to check if there is a medical reason for the way we feel and to give us advice about treatment and medication.

5 Limit or cut out the use of alcohol and other drugs

When we are feeling down we sometimes think that alcohol or drugs can help. They are not the answer. Any good feelings that they can give us do not last long and when we get up the next day the problem is still there. If we are feeling down, alcohol and other drugs can make us feel worse, and can get in the way of our good plans for change and sorting out our problems.

8 Medication

Anti-depressant medications can help. There are many different types, which may have different side effects and some might work better for us than others. If we are taking antidepressants it is important to see our doctor again to talk about how we are going and about possible side effects of the medications.

6 Think positive

The way we think about things affects the way we feel. When we're feeling down we tend to take more notice of things that go wrong rather than things that go well. We all have bad days but when we are down we tend to exaggerate how bad things are and can think that our problems are a whole lot worse than they really are. Doctors, psychologists and counsellors are good at teaching skills that help us to think more positively.

9 Try something different

If we find that we are not feeling better it is important to try something different. We can talk again to a friend, family member, an elder, counsellor, or an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker. We can go for help again to our local health centre or Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Service to talk about what different things we can do. There is always help – we don't have to be alone.

Places to go for help now:

Call Lifeline's 24 hour telephone crisis support service on 13 11 14

Useful resources

- Visit Lifeline's website to access information and resources www.lifeline.org.au
- Your local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Service
- Local or regional Mental Health service providers
- Aboriginal HealthInfoNet - 'one-stop info-shop' that aims to contribute to 'closing the gap' in health between Indigenous and other Australians by informing practice and policy in Indigenous health by making research and other knowledge readily accessible
www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au
- Beyondblue national depression initiative
www.beyondblue.org.au
- Blue pages online depression support
www.bluepages.anu.edu.au

Acknowledgements:



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Prime Super is the proud sponsor of the Lifeline Information Service – your mental health and self-help resource.

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For more information on Prime Super, please ring 1800 675 839 or visit their website www.primesuper.com.au

Lifeline and Prime Super are working in partnership to promote mental health awareness, help-seeking and suicide prevention.



This tool kit was developed with content input and advice from the Aboriginal and Islander Mental Health Initiative at Menzies School of Health Research – AIMHI/Menzies.edu.au



For 24 hour telephone crisis support call 13 11 14
For more information visit www.lifeline.org.au
To donate call 1 800 800 768

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