

# What is depression?

We all go through ups and downs in our mood. Sadness is a normal reaction to life's struggles, setbacks, and disappointments. Many people use the word "depression" to explain these kinds of feelings, but clinical depression is much more than just sadness.

Some people describe depression as "living in a black hole" or having a feeling of impending doom. However, some depressed people don't feel sad at all — instead, they feel lifeless, empty, and apathetic.

Whatever the symptoms, depression is different from normal sadness in that it engulfs your day-to-day life, interfering with your ability to work, study, eat, sleep, and have fun. The feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and worthlessness are intense and unrelenting, with little, if any, relief.

## Signs and symptoms of depression

If you identify with several of the following signs and symptoms, and they just won't go away, you may be suffering from clinical depression.

Depression varies from person to person, but there are some common signs and symptoms. It's important to remember that these symptoms can be part of life's normal lows. But the more symptoms you have, the stronger they are, and the longer they've lasted — the more likely it is that you're dealing with depression. When these symptoms are overwhelming and disabling, that's when it's time to seek help.

### Common signs and symptoms of depression

- **Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.** A bleak outlook—nothing will ever get better and there's nothing you can do to improve your situation.
- **Loss of interest in daily activities.** No interest in or ability to enjoy former hobbies, pastimes, social activities, or sex.
- **Appetite or weight changes.** Significant weight loss or weight gain—a change of more than 5% of body weight in a month.



- **Sleep changes.** Either insomnia, especially waking in the early hours of the morning, or oversleeping (also known as hypersomnia).
- **Psychomotor agitation or retardation.** Either feeling "keyed up" and restless or sluggish and physically slowed down.
- **Loss of energy.** Feeling fatigued and physically drained. Even small tasks are exhausting or take longer.
- **Self-loathing.** Strong feelings of worthlessness or guilt. Harsh criticism of perceived faults and mistakes.
- **Concentration problems.** Trouble focusing, making decisions, or remembering things.

## Depression and suicide

Depression is a major risk factor for suicide. The deep despair and hopelessness that goes along with depression can make suicide feel like the only way to escape the pain.

### Thoughts of death or suicide: A serious symptom of depression

A suicidal person may not ask for help, but that doesn't mean that help isn't wanted. Most people who are suicidal don't want to die — they just want to stop hurting. Take any suicidal talk or behavior seriously. It's not just a warning sign that the person is thinking about suicide: it's a cry for help. If you think a friend or family member is considering suicide, you might be afraid to bring up the subject. But talking openly about suicidal thoughts and feelings can save a life. Speak up if you're concerned and seek professional help immediately! Suicide prevention starts with recognizing the warning signs and taking action.

*(Continued on Reverse Side)*

## Thoughts of Death or Suicide

If you are feeling suicidal, know that there are many people who want to support you during this difficult time, even if it doesn't feel like it. Reach out for help!

*If you are considering suicide, call 1-800-273-TALK now!*

## If you or someone you know is struggling with:

- Depression
- Stress
- Tension
- Anxiety
- Panic
- Mood Disorders
- Fatigue
- Sleeplessness
- Worry
- Anger
- Fears
- Helplessness
- Hopelessness

***YOU ARE NOT ALONE!***

***HELP IS AVAILABLE!***



## LOCAL AGENCIES & SELF HELP GROUPS:

**CRISIS SERVICES** (24 hr. hotline)  
(716) 834-3131

[www.crisisservices.org/suicide.asp](http://www.crisisservices.org/suicide.asp)

**CATHOLIC CHARITIES:** (716) 856-4494

[www.ccwny.org](http://www.ccwny.org)

**MSGR. CARR INSTITUTE:** (716) 895-7718

**COMMUNITY CONCERN:** (716) 947-5025

**RECOVERY INTERNATIONAL:**

(716) 694-0104

[www.lowselfhelpsystems.org](http://www.lowselfhelpsystems.org)

**Recovery International** provides weekly peer led self-help meetings, as well as telephone meetings and online forums. It is a safe, confidential place to talk about life's challenges and receive support for self-help efforts.

Recovery International Meetings Offer:  
Reassurance and fellowship through meeting friendly people with similar problems who have found a way to live happier, healthier lives.

### Local Recovery International Meetings:

Hamburg –  
Wednesday – 7:30-9:30 pm  
Wayside Presbyterian Church  
S-5017 Lake Shore Rd. – Room 206

Fredonia –  
Tuesday – 7:30-9:30 pm  
Fredonia Baptist Church  
19 Church St.

*Information courtesy of  
St. Anthony's*

*Respect Life Committee*