DISCOVERING HOPE

DEALING WITH DEPRESSION
Did you know that depression is one of the top five issues college students face? This resource will help you:

- Increase your knowledge and understanding about depression.
- Gain skills and life-long tools to recognize and manage symptoms you may be experiencing.
Practice the skills and suggestions given here to help alleviate and manage mild to moderate symptoms of depression. Think of it as “mental health hygiene” to prevent a build-up of stress and anxiety over time.

(For severe clinical depression, seeing a counselor regularly is advised.)
**IS MY SADNESS “NORMAL”?**

These descriptions, while not an exhaustive list, can help you determine whether your level of sadness is of concern.

**EVERYDAY**
- Triggered by a difficult, hurtful, challenging or disappointing event or situation
- Symptoms disappear when the stressor disappears or over time
- Crying, venting or talking it out can relieve symptoms
- Daily life activities may be affected on a short-term basis (sleeping, eating, working)

**CONCERN**
- Symptoms last two weeks or more
- Pervasive feelings of sadness with no obvious trigger
- Lack of motivation, energy, and interest most of the time
- Increased irritability, anger, frustration
- Significant changes in sleep, appetite, weight
- Difficulty focusing, concentrating, creativity, and making decisions
Common depression disorders include:

- **Major Depressive Disorder**
  - Depressive episodes lasting two weeks or more, including a minimum of five symptoms

- **Persistent Depressive Disorder**
  - Depressed mood and at least two other symptoms that last for at least two years. May have episodes of major depression along with periods of less severe symptoms

- **Bipolar II Disorder**
  - Experiences of both depressive episodes as well as "mixed" or hypomanic episodes

- **Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder**
  - Recurrent temper outbursts and persistently irritable or angry mood for at least one year (present between ages 6-18)
Common symptoms include:

- Sadness
- Anxiety
- Feelings of hopelessness or helplessness
- Irritability
- Mood swings
- Guilt
- Anger

**Emotions**

- Crying
- Withdrawal from others
- Neglected responsibilities
- Changes in personal appearance
- Moving more slowly
- Being agitated, unable to settle

**Behavior**

- Frequent self-criticism
- Impaired memory and concentration
- Indecisiveness
- Confusion
- Thoughts of death and suicide
- Chronic fatigue
- Lack of energy
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Weight gain or loss
- Loss of motivation
- Substance abuse
- Unexplained aches and pains

**Physical**

**Thoughts**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schema</th>
<th>Belief</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abandonment</td>
<td>Others are unreliable and will eventually leave. Relationships are fragile, loss is inevitable, and you will ultimately wind up alone.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approval-Seeking, Recognition-Seeking</td>
<td>Approval, attention, and recognition from others are far more important than genuine self-expression or being true to yourself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defectiveness/Shame</td>
<td>You are flawed, unlovable, or damaged and will be rejected by significant others if exposed. May involve hypersensitivity to criticism, insecurity around others, or shame regarding perceived flaws.</td>
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<td>Dependence/Incompetence</td>
<td>Your judgment is questionable and you are incompetent, which leads to feeling like you are unable to handle day-to-day responsibilities (i.e., taking care of yourself or making good choices) without considerable help from others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional Deprivation</td>
<td>Your primary emotional needs, including nurturing, protection, and empathy, will never be met.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional Inhibition</td>
<td>You must control your self-expression or others will reject or criticize you.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Common Schemas</td>
<td>Belief</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Enmeshment/Undeveloped Self</strong></td>
<td>You do not have an individual identity separate from one or more significant others, resulting in unhelpful levels of emotional involvement and closeness. May also include feelings of smothering.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Entitlement/Grandiosity</strong></td>
<td>You are special or more important than other people and entitled to special rights and privileges, even though it may have a negative effect on others. May include an exaggerated focus on superiority in order to achieve power or control.</td>
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<td><strong>Failure</strong></td>
<td>You have failed, will inevitably fail, or are fundamentally inadequate in areas of achievement (i.e., school, career, sports, etc.).</td>
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<td><strong>Insufficient Self Control/Self-Discipline</strong></td>
<td>Difficulty or refusal to exercise self-control and frustration tolerance in order to achieve personal goals, or to restrain the excessive expression of emotions and impulses.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mistrust/Abuse</strong></td>
<td>Others will hurt, abuse, humiliate, cheat, or manipulate you. Usually involves the belief that the harm is intentional or due to extreme negligence.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Negativity/Pessimism</strong></td>
<td>The negative aspects of life outweigh positive or optimistic aspects. The expectation that things will eventually go seriously wrong or that things that seem to be going well will ultimately fall apart.</td>
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<td><strong>Punitiveness</strong></td>
<td>People should be harshly punished for their mistakes or shortcomings.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Sacrifice</strong></td>
<td>You should focus on meeting the needs of others at the expense of your own needs, to the point that it is excessive and harmful.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social Isolation</strong></td>
<td>You are isolated from the rest of the world, different from other people, and/or alienated from a community.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Subjugation</strong></td>
<td>Excessive surrendering of control to others because you feel coerced, usually to avoid anger, retaliation, or abandonment.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Unrelenting Standards</strong></td>
<td>You need to be the best, constantly striving for perfection or trying to avoid mistakes.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Vulnerability</strong></td>
<td>The world is a dangerous place; catastrophe will strike at any time and you will be unable to prevent it.</td>
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SAMPLE EXERCISE

Read the example, then fill in a situation of your own with a goal of understanding key things that upset you. This will help you understand why that type of situation is problematic and/or repeating.

**SITUATION**
What did you feel sad about? When? Where? With whom?
I have a group assignment due for my class. I asked a fellow classmate to be my partner, but she declined.

**EMOTIONAL**
What emotions did you feel when you felt depressed?
Sad, ashamed, embarrassed, rejected

**COGNITIVE**
What went through your mind when you felt depressed? What did that say or mean about you or the situation?
I knew I shouldn’t have asked her; she’s way smarter than me. If we had worked together, I only would have brought down the grade. I’m so stupid. She must hate me.

**BEHAVIORAL**
What was your first instinct and/or automatic response? What did you do and/or avoid doing at the time?
I want to avoid asking anyone else in case they say no. I left class early and haven’t found a partner to work with. I’ll avoid talking to her in the future.
ALTERNATE RESPONSES

Now think of alternate responses you could use in a similar situation in the future.

SITUATION
What did you feel sad about? When? Where? With whom?
A student I don’t know very well invited me to a party, and I felt anxious about going.

ALTERNATE BEHAVIORS
What could you do that would be more helpful for you, others, and/or the situation? What coping strategies might be helpful?
I could try deep breathing, and do a pleasurable activity, or use this worksheet.

ALTERNATE FEELINGS
What are feelings that are more helpful? What if you acted and thought differently about the situation? How might these changes help you feel differently?
Optimistic, confident, relaxed, neutral

ALTERNATE THOUGHTS & IMAGES
Are these thoughts helpful? Are the depressed thoughts 100% true/accurate 100% of the time? What are other ways of looking at this? What is the bigger picture?
She might already have a partner.
I’ve done well in this class so far, so I might not be stupid.
Not everyone is going to like me and that is okay.
What did you feel anxious about? When? Where? With whom?
A student I don’t know very well invited me to a party, and I felt anxious about going.

I left class early and e-mailed my professor to assign me a partner.

What would you like the outcome to be in the future?
I would like to say, “thanks anyway” and will ask a person with whom I have worked well in the past.
IF YOU’RE HAVING TROUBLE, ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS

ALTERNATIVE THOUGHTS

- Am I looking at the whole picture?
- What might be a more helpful way of thinking about this situation?
- What is the evidence that my thoughts are true? Is there an alternative way of thinking about this situation that is more accurate?
- Can I read people’s minds? What else might they be thinking?
- If a friend or loved one were in this situation and had this thought, what would I tell them?
- What is the probability that my thoughts will happen? What are some other things that could happen that are equally, if not more, probable?
- Have I had any experiences in the past that suggest that this thought might not be COMPLETELY true ALL of the time?
- Can I really predict the future? Is it helpful to try? What is more helpful?
- Am I exaggerating how bad the result might be? What is more realistic?

TRY THIS...
IF YOU’RE HAVING TROUBLE, ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS

ALTERNATIVE BEHAVIORS

- What could I do in the moment that would be more helpful?
- What’s the best thing to do (for me, for others, or for the situation)?
- If my feared situation happens, how will I cope? What coping skills can I use to handle my feared situation? What have I done in the past that was successful?
- Do I need to work on acceptance, letting go of control, being okay with less than perfect, or having faith in the future and myself?
- Breathe: Focus your attention on your breathing. Imagine you have a balloon in your belly, inflating on the in-breath, deflating on the out-breath.

TRY THIS...
IF YOU’RE HAVING TROUBLE, ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS

ALTERNATIVE FEELINGS

- What might it feel like if I acted/thought differently?
- When I’m not feeling this way, do I think about this situation differently?
- Are there any strengths or positives in me or the situation that I might be ignoring?
- What else might this feeling be related to? Is it really about feeling ____?
- Tell yourself: “This feeling will pass. It’s a normal body reaction.”
HELPFUL THOUGHT TIPS

✓ **Stop.** Interrupt a thought as it begins. Use a strong image or a word to interrupt the thought. Strongly state it, either internally or aloud.

✓ **Distract.** Redirect your mind to something else internally or externally, preferably something pleasant and engaging.

✓ **Mindfully Observe.** Watch, label, or log your thoughts. Use the language “I am thinking...” or “My mind is having the thought that...” to distance yourself from the thought.

✓ **Understand.** Begin to understand where thoughts come from by asking questions, including: What is the purpose of this thought? Does it tie to a specific schema?

✓ **Mindfully Let Go.** Use imagery or words to visualize thoughts passing by. Good examples are clouds in the sky or leaves in a stream.

✓ **Gratitude.** Try to focus on something that you are grateful for from the past, present, or future.
WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

**BEHAVIORAL TIPS**

- **Get sunlight:** Aim for 5 to 15 minutes of sunlight a day. Sunlight increases the brain’s release of serotonin, which is associated with boosting mood.

- **Stand up straight:** Your body tells your brain how to feel. Stand up straight and open your chest to feel more confident.

- **Dance:** Dancing combines music and physical activity so it is a double whammy.

- **Do progressive muscle relaxation:** Flex a tight muscle for a few seconds and release. Pay particular attention to your facial muscles as those have the largest effect on emotion.
Create/listen to music: Music can help regulate your emotions. It can be soothing and help you feel calm and/or it can be energizing and pump you up.

Journal: Labeling your emotions and writing your story can be cathartic and help you organize your thoughts.

Smile (even if you’re faking): When you smile, you are more likely to perceive positive emotions in other people, which can positively impact your mood. Smiling will lead your brain to believe that you are happy.
WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

- Ways to improve mental health
- Signs of depression and suicide
- Relaxation exercises
- Ted Talks on mental health
- Anonymous online screenings

Handouts and videos are available at https://calbaptist.edu/counseling-center/student-resources
HERE TO HELP

CBU COUNSELING CENTER
3626 MONROE ST
951.689.1120
CALBAPTIST.EDU/COUNSELING

AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS
NO ADDITIONAL CHARGE
CONFIDENTIAL
MAKE AN APPOINTMENT
CALL 951.689.1120
or
REQUEST ONLINE: https://calbaptist.edu/counseling-center/request-first-time-appointment