



Australian Government
Department of Defence

Depression

Defence Mental Health & Wellbeing





*'Mental health and wellbeing is the state in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stress of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community'**

Defence's vision is that our people – military and public servants – experience positive mental health and wellbeing. *They are Fit to Fight – Fit to Work – Fit for Life.*

*World Health Organization



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, or as if you are a burden to others
- feeling tired all the time
- everything feeling like a major effort
- thoughts of suicide or self-harm.

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 in your workplace is in crisis and you think immediate action is needed, call **Emergency Services 000**, contact your doctor or local mental health crisis service, or go to your local hospital emergency department.

Emergency contact information – 24 hours

If you or someone you know needs help, call:

- Emergency on **000**
- Lifeline on **13 11 14**
- Suicide Call Back Service on **1300 659 467**.

ADF

Contact your local on base Health Centre, Mental Health Professional or the Duty Officer/Officer of the Day for immediate assistance and referrals.

The ADF Health and Wellbeing Portal is an online health information resource tool for ADF members and their families www.defence.gov.au/health/healthportal/

Your chain of command is a primary resource that can provide advice, referral and support.

Military Chaplains are connected to all ships/units/bases around Australia and on Operations. They can provide all-hours support and appropriate referral. To access Defence Chaplaincy support, call **1300 333 362** and ask to speak to the Duty Chaplain from your area and service.

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 (1800 467 425)** to locate the nearest support.

Defence Family Helpline (1800 624 608) The Defence Family Helpline is available 24/7 for ADF Members and their families, and is staffed by qualified human services professionals including social workers and psychologists. Defence Community Organisation website is: www.defence.gov.au/dco

The National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC)

Serving Families of Deployed Australian Defence Personnel.

As part of the Headquarters Joint Operations Command, the National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC) provides a 24 hour support, referral and information service for families of Defence personnel deployed on operations and exercises.

1800 801 026 or **+ 61 2 6127 1812**.

Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office (SeMPRO)

SeMPRO offers advice, guidance and support to current and former Defence personnel who have been affected by sexual misconduct, whether the incident is current or historical.

This includes support to ADF cadets, officers and instructors of cadets, APS personnel, commanders, managers, supervisors, support people and families affected by sexual misconduct. **1800 736 776 (1800SeMPRO)**.

Open Arms – Veterans and Families Counselling (formerly WCS): is a national mental health service that provides 24-hour free and confidential counselling, group programs and suicide prevention training for current and ex-serving ADF members, and their family. To get support or to find out more, call **1800 011 046** or visit **www.OpenArms.gov.au**

APS (and Reservists)

Defence Employee Assistance Program (EAP) (including the Reserve Assistance Program – RAP). The EAP provides short term confidential counselling and support for employees and immediate family members (if eligible). It is easily accessible, voluntary and can provide support on a range of personal and work related issues. The Defence EAP can be accessed by calling **1300 687 327**.