

Dealing with depression



What does depression feel like?

Depression doesn't mean just feeling sad. Nowadays, however, depression is often misused to describe normal, temporary feelings of sadness, grief or disappointment. Depression is an extreme low mood that lasts at least 2 weeks in which someone feels extremely sad and hopeless, with lots of negative or self-critical thoughts. Their energy levels are reduced and their sleep, appetite, concentration and memory may all be affected. They might feel irritable, and often, particularly men with depression, might appear to be angry, rather than low.

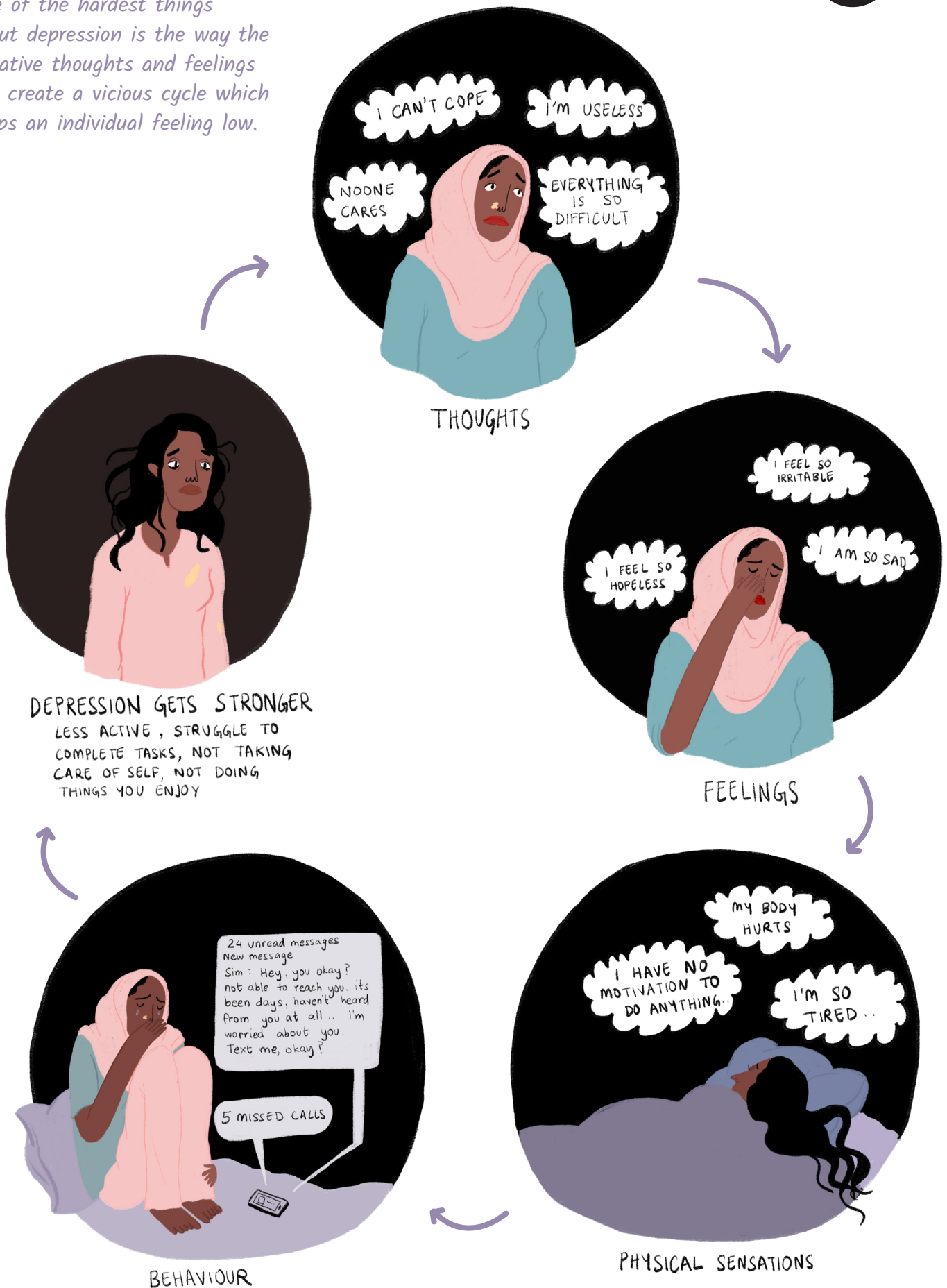
What causes depression?

Like all mental health problems, depression is caused by a combination of different factors including an individual's genes, the influences of early life experience, current stressful events, and one's internal coping style. The triggers for depression can be different for different people though often they are related to some type of loss (such as a break-up, bereavement or academic failure) or traumatic event (such as sexual or physical assault). Sometimes people find depression might occur completely out of the blue.

What is the cycle of depression?



One of the hardest things about depression is the way the negative thoughts and feelings can create a vicious cycle which keeps an individual feeling low.



What can I do to tackle depression?



There are a range of things you can do to help deal with depression. All of them work to tackle the vicious cycle of depression by acting in the opposite direction to the way the negative thoughts and feelings of depression push you.

Exercise

Being more active or taking exercise can really help to tackle the low energy and tiredness of depression, as well as boost self-esteem and give you a sense of accomplishment.



Do things that are important to you

Plan daily activities that are meaningful to you. These could be things you need to do, things that give you a sense of connection with other people or things that give you pleasure. Do them even if the depression means you don't feel like it. This is a really important way to break the vicious cycle and gradually, the more you re-engage with things in life which are important to you, the more the feelings of pleasure and satisfaction will come back.



Step back from negative thoughts

Try to remember that the negative thoughts of depression are not facts about you, other people or the world — they are the voice of depression which focuses on the bad things and ignores positives. Try these tips to take a step back from the voice of depression:

Fact or Opinion: Pause and ask yourself, is this thought a fact (undisputed information based on evidence) or an opinion (a personal view based on a feeling) – you will likely find the voice of depression has a lot of opinions!



Get professional support

Depression is treatable, and there are a number of different treatment options you can consider. Talking therapies (such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Psychodynamic Psychotherapy) as well as antidepressant medications (such as SSRIs and SNRIs)

have proven effective for depression. Therapists, counsellors or psychologists focus on talk therapy as treatment while psychiatrists are medical doctors who can prescribe medications. It is completely up to you what treatment you feel will work best for you.