

## DEPRESSION

### WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

We all have occasional 'down' times which usually pass in a few days or weeks. Depression is different. This is a medical illness which is common and very treatable. People who are suffering from depression need medical help; they are not lazy and it is not a matter of "just pulling up their socks".

### HAVE YOU HAD THESE FEELINGS FOR MORE THAN A FEW WEEKS?

- Feeling sad
- Feeling worthless
- Feeling hopeless
- Feelings of guilt or shame
- Lack of motivation to do anything
- Irritable
- Difficulty concentrating
- Poor memory
- Thoughts of harming yourself

### DOES YOUR BODY OFTEN FEEL LIKE THIS?

- Change in appetite or weight
- Aches and pains
- Problems sleeping- hard to get to sleep or waking up early in the morning
- Tiredness, lack of energy
- Lack of interest in sex

### WHAT CAUSES DEPRESSION?

It is assumed that people who are depressed have an imbalance in the chemicals in the brain. There may be an inherited tendency to this condition or it may be triggered by stressful events, or use of alcohol or drugs. There are a number of factors that may play a role, including the increased pace and stress experienced in modern societies, increased mobility and reduced sense of community and close supports.

### WHAT CAN I DO?

#### ▪ Challenge your thoughts

People who are depressed are very hard on themselves and see the negative side of situations, which makes the feelings of depression worse. Try to identify what is positive in your life. Challenge a negative idea or thought by finding exceptions to what you assume is true. For example, if you think nobody cares about you, make a list of people

who do care or who have been kind to you. If you think nothing works out for you, find exceptions to this thought even if they are small exceptions.

- **Eat a healthy diet**  
Your body needs good food to help it feel better. Cut down on sugar and caffeine. Eat small meals. Follow Canada's Food Guide.
- **Be more active**  
Start small; even a five minute walk will make you feel better and give you more energy. Gradually increase your activity. Moderate exercise and activity can protect you from becoming depressed.
- **See your Doctor**  
Many people benefit from antidepressant medication so that they feel better to make other changes in their life. Your doctor may refer you to a mental health professional for further treatment.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Visit our website at: [www.mentalhealthsouthshore.ca](http://www.mentalhealthsouthshore.ca)

Visit the website: [www.heretohelp.bc.ca](http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca) and download their depression toolkit

### **WHERE CAN I GET HELP?**

Your Family Doctor or mental health professional can help you learn techniques to manage your depression. A professional can see you individually or you could join a group educational session.

Call the Mental Health Program for an appointment or information on free acupuncture or group programs.

**Mental Health Program, South Shore Health  
Dawson Centre, Level 2  
197 Dufferin Street  
Bridgewater, Nova Scotia  
B4V 2G9**

**Call (902) 527-5228 Monday to Friday (except holidays) 8:30-4:30**

[www.mentalhealthsouthshore.ca](http://www.mentalhealthsouthshore.ca)

