









EMPLOYEE SERIES

Tips for managing depression.

When depression hits it can seem as though there's no way out. Knowing how to respond effectively can help you find a sense of life satisfaction again.

-  **You are not alone.** If you have been feeling miserable, flat or intense sadness two weeks or more, when there's no apparent reason, you may need some help. Nearly one in four people experience depression at some point in their life.
-  **Signs.** The sooner you identify signs of depression, the sooner you can implement strategies to manage it. Signs can include; change in sleep patterns and appetite, tiredness, inability to concentrate, loss of interest, withdrawing, feeling overwhelmed, feeling helpless and/or hopeless, and dwelling on unhelpful thoughts.
-  **Risk factors.** There are a number of factors that increase your risk to depression including; a family history of depression, physical illness, trauma, high levels of anxiety (being a 'worrier'), alcohol and other drug use, and life stressors such as conflict at work or home, unemployment or prolonged work stress.
-  **Goals.** Set small achievable goals and build slowly from there. Your energy levels may be low, but draw from the resources you do have; you may not be ready to run a marathon, but consider going for a brief walk around the block to get yourself moving. Each achievement counts towards your recovery.
-  **Physical health.** Physical and psychological health are closely related. Exercise is an ideal treatment for depression. It helps reduce stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline, and stimulates release of serotonin, dopamine and endorphins, which make us feel good. Prioritise good quality sleep, follow a healthy, balanced diet, and avoid caffeine, alcohol, and sugar where possible.
-  **Mindfulness.** When you are caught up in your thoughts, you miss out on enjoying life in the here and now. Use mindfulness to focus your attention on the present moment by using your five senses. Notice what you can see, hear, taste, smell and touch.
-  **Thoughts.** Put your worries and concerns into perspective, and look for the shades of grey rather than the black and white extremes. Ask yourself, "Is there is another way of looking at the situation?".
-  **Support.** Reaching out is not a sign of weakness and does not mean you're a burden to others. Getting support is important as others can help you sustain the effort needed for recovery.