



MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

Mental Health & Wellbeing

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Strategy**

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Depression

Everyone feels sad, low in their energy or mood at times, but sometimes some people will have these feelings in an intense way for a long time which impacts their ability to do things.

If you're experiencing depression, it's important to remember that you're not alone- [1 in 16 Australians](#) each year will have depression, and that there are effective treatments available for depression- it's important to reach out if you need help.

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What is depression?

Depression impacts more than just mental health- as well as impacting how you feel, think and act, it can also impact physical health. Some symptoms of depression include:

- **Feeling** sad, overwhelmed, hopeless, angry, irritable, guilty or indecisive
- **Recurring negative thoughts**, such as 'I'm a failure' or 'life's not worth living'
- **Changes in behaviour**, like not doing things you used to enjoy, not leaving the house, having difficulty concentrating and getting things done, or drinking more alcohol
- **Physical changes**, like having trouble sleeping or being tired all the time, changes in appetite or weight changes, or having headaches, muscle pains or digestive problems

Even though the symptoms of depression can be challenging, there are lots of people who can support you and many different options to help manage the symptoms of depression and get you back to living your life.

Types of depression

There are several kinds of depression, each of which include low mood as a symptom but differ in other ways.

- **[Major depression](#)**, also known as major depressive disorder, is often what people are referring to when they talk about 'depression', and it involves persistent low mood that occurs on most days and often interferes with daily activities and relationships.
- **Persistent depressive disorder**, also known as dysthymia, is a form of depression which lasts longer than major depression but has fewer or less severe symptoms than major depression.
- **[Bipolar disorder](#)**, which used to be known as manic depression, is a form of depression which involves periods of depression as well as periods of mania. These manic periods can include symptoms like extremely high energy or agitation, reduced need for sleep, racing speech and thoughts, a very high level of self-confidence or poor decision making.
- **[Seasonal affective disorder \(SAD\)](#)**, also known as seasonal depressive disorder, is a form of depression that occurs in a particular part of the year, usually during the colder months.
- **[Postnatal depression](#)** is a form of depression that starts in the first 12 months following the birth of a baby, and **antenatal depression** is a similar form of depression that begins during pregnancy. Postnatal depression and antenatal depression [can impact any parent](#), not just mothers.

Strategies for managing depression

The symptoms of depression can be difficult to manage alone, but it's important to remember that there's many effective treatments and services available to help. Getting support early is important because the sooner you seek help, the sooner you can begin recovering. There's many different treatments and strategies available, and the first thing you try might not be right for you- the important thing is to find the mix of strategies that are helpful for you.

Getting support

For many people, the first step to getting support is via your local GP, or general practitioner. They can listen to what's going on for you, give suggestions of strategies you can use to help manage your mental health, and direct you to other support if you need it. If you're eligible, they might suggest a [mental health care plan](#), which will give you access through Medicare to ten sessions with a mental health professional, such as a psychologist.

If you're worried about making an appointment or talking to a health professional, you can try asking a trusted friend or family member to help you do this.

Below are a list of different phone numbers you can call to get more information about what support is available and how you can access it, as well as about the supports available for students through Western Sydney University.

Types of treatment

For treatment of milder depression, self-management strategies can be highly effective in helping to manage their symptoms. However, for more severe depression, there are two main types of treatment available:

- **Antidepressant medications:** There's a wide range of antidepressant medications available which can be prescribed by a GP, psychologist or psychiatrist. These medications can sometimes have side effects, or may not work right away, but the person prescribing the medication will work with you to find the right medication and right dose for you to manage your symptoms and avoid side effects.
- **Psychological therapy**, also known as 'talk therapy': These therapies involve talking with someone such as a psychologist. One type of therapy they might use is called [Cognitive Behaviour Therapy](#) (CBT) which has been shown to be helpful for people with depression.

Self-management and lifestyle strategies

Self-management strategies can be helpful for managing mild depression and alongside other strategies for managing more severe depression. They can be helpful for anyone looking to improve their mood or their motivation.

[ReachOut](#) has a great resource which looks at different self-help strategies, including:

- Challenge negative thoughts
- Avoid using alcohol and drugs
- Stay active
- Do things you enjoy
- Talk to someone
- Get outside
- Try some changes to the food you eat
- Practise relaxation
- Think about your media consumption
- Other strategies to try next

Depression and my studies

The symptoms of depression can make studying at university more challenging, but there's lots of things you can do to help you succeed in your academic journey.

Reach out to university services

Western Sydney University has many services available to support you in your time at university. The [Counselling Service](#) and [Disability Service](#) are confidential and can help provide information about what supports are available at university and how to access them. You can find details on how to contact these services below.

Other people who can be helpful to talk to include your course advisor and your subject coordinator. Your course advisor can help you consider the most suitable unit structure or your options on part-time study. It can be helpful to speak to your subject coordinator and to keep lines of communication open with Academic Staff throughout the study session.

Planning and time management

It's not uncommon for people with depression to find they have difficulties with motivation. Using planning and time management skills can help you feel on top of your studies and keep you on track with due dates.

- **Find a good planner or calendar:** whether that's an app or website such as [Google Calendar](#), one of the [planners](#) designed around the WSU calendar, or a paper journal, and write down your due dates and other appointments and commitments, like social events. A to-do app, like [Microsoft To Do](#) or [Todoist](#) can also be helpful for keeping on top of things you need to do and feeling in control.
- **Break tasks down:** when assignments or household tasks feel overwhelming, breaking them down into smaller steps can help them feel much more achievable and give you an idea of where to start. For instance, you could try writing down a list of the different steps you'll need to do to complete an assignment, or the different topics you want to cover before an exam.
- **Plan out your week ahead of time:** think about the things you need to do, like study, your job, seeing friends, finding time for exercise, and sleep, and make achievable plans by setting aside blocks of time in your planner for each of the things you need to do. When you break down tasks like assignments into more achievable chunks, think about when you could find time to do those smaller steps and slot them into your calendar. Try to be flexible- think about what's realistic and leave space for things which might pop up. Many students find it helpful to use a [Weekly Planner](#) and [Daily Planner](#) to assist in structuring their schedule and studies.

Set yourself up for success

There are lots of small things that can make a big difference when you're trying to focus. Your location can make a big impact on your ability to study- you might find that the best place for you is alone at a desk at home, or in a library. Either way, try to set yourself up well- clear the space around you, make sure you have all the resources you need, and try to reduce distractions- maybe by turning off the tv in the background or sitting in a quiet study area.

Think about what times of day work best for you and try and plan around those. Maybe you might find studying with others helpful, or perhaps you work best alone- if you're having difficulty focusing, have a think about what might be helpful for you or what changes might make things easier.

University support

If depression is creating barriers that may affect your study or you would like some support with your mental health, the WSU [Counselling Service](#), [Disability Service](#), or [Welfare Service](#) may be able to help.

- **WSU [Counselling Service](#).**

Students can access free, short term, confidential counselling services. Face to face, Zoom or phone appointments can be made by telephoning 1300 668 370. Our office hours are Monday to Friday 9.00am - 4:30pm. Alternatively, or email counselling@westernsydney.edu.au

- **WSU [Disability Service](#).**

The Disability Service is free to access with Disability Advisors assisting students to meet their full potential. If you have a diagnosed physical, psychological or medical condition that impacts on your studies, you may be eligible for an [Academic Integration Plan \(AIP\)](#), developed by the Disability Service. Contact the Disability Service on 1300 668 370, email disability@westernsydney.edu.au or make contact via [WesternNow](#).

- **WSU [Welfare Service](#).**

Academic, Personal and Financial Hardship, International Support and Accommodation: 1300 668 370 or via [WesternNow](#).

- **Multifaith [Chaplaincy](#)**

Multifaith Chaplaincy can provide confidential conversation and care, support for stress management and anxiety with links to religious groups and faith communities. For more information, please call Daniel Jantos on 0402771543 or email d.jantos@westernsydney.edu.au.

- **WesternLife**

[WesternLife](#) - Join thousands of students at Your Virtual Community to share experiences, learn new things, connect with new friends, and engage with events or discussions that interest you!

- **Disruption to Studies**

Consider applying for [Disruption to Studies](#) and [Requests for Extension](#) if you feel as though your studies have been significantly impacted.

- **Deferred Exam**

[Deferred Exam](#) – You can apply for a Deferred Exam no later than 5.00 pm on the second working day after your scheduled exam if you are unable to attend a final exam due to serious illness, misadventure or other exceptional circumstances beyond your control. Submit a [Student Form](#) and attach supporting documents online for application.

- **Withdrawal Without Academic Penalty**

[Withdrawal Without Academic Penalty](#) is an option available after the Census Date of the teaching term provided that you meet eligibility.

- **Leave of absence**

A [Leave of Absence](#) is a temporary break from studying. Once you have completed one or more subjects in your enrolled program, you can apply for a Leave of Absence. A Leave of Absence can be taken as either six or twelve months. The maximum amount of leave you can take during your program is twelve months. Please note, you must submit your application before the relevant census date

If you are considering any of these options, please reach out to the counselling service for support and guidance. If you are an international student, please make sure you seek advice particularly if you are considering withdrawing without penalty or taking a leave of absence as these may have [implications for your visa conditions](#).

Community support

- [Lifeline](#)

Lifeline (24 hours crisis counselling) - **13 11 14**

Lifeline SMS Counselling Service - between 6pm- Midnight you can text **0477 13 11 14** and somebody will text you back! You can find more information [here](#).

- **Mental Health Telephone Access Line**

[Mental Health Telephone Access Line](#) - 1800 011 511

This Mental Health Line is staffed by mental health professionals that can help and provide you advice about your needs and discuss referrals to local mental health services. It is available to everyone in NSW and operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

- [Head to Health](#) is an Australian Government online mental health resource designed to help you find digital mental health resources that are the right fit for you.
- [Headspace](#) - Headspace is a support and counselling service for those aged 12-25 that provide support to manage mental health. You can contact them on **1800 650 890** or through online chats.
- [QLife](#) - Provides LGBTI peer support and referral. Contact them on **1800 184 527** (6pm-10pm daily) or you can chat online (online chat 3pm-12am daily)
- [Sane Australia](#) provides information about mental illness, treatments, where to go for support, and has an online forum.

Resources

- [Websites](#)
- [Podcasts](#)
- [Videos](#)
- [Apps](#)

Websites

[This Way Up](#) - Self-paced online programs that teach clinically proven strategies to help you improve the way you feel.

[My Compass](#) – This free online treatment program has been developed by the Black Dog Institute to help people better self-manage mild-to-moderate symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress.

[MindSpot](#)- Free, online, personalised mental health care that's backed by evidence. MindSpot provides access to qualified therapists for assessment and treatment and is available to all Australian adults who are eligible for Medicare.

Embrace Multicultural Mental Health has a [factsheet](#) about depression available in a variety of languages.

Apps

Smiling Mind: A free, evidence-based mindfulness and meditation app. Mindfulness meditation has been shown to help manage stress, resilience, anxiety, depression and improve general health and wellbeing.

iBobbly (**iOS**, **Android**) is a free wellbeing self-help app from for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians aged 15 years and over who are feeling sad and down.

HeadGear (**iOS**, **Android**) is a free app by the Black Dog Institute that guides you through a 30–day mental fitness challenge designed to build resilience and wellbeing and prevent things like depression and anxiety.

Mood Meter (**iOS**, **Android**) is a free, evidence-based app which lets you track how your mood and helps you think about strategies for managing how you're feeling.

Mindshift (**iOS**, **Android**) is a Cognitive Behaviour Therapy based app which can help you create more helpful thought patterns. Though the title of this app does have the word 'anxiety' in it, CBT (as discussed above in the 'strategies for managing depression' section) is a therapy that's proven to be helpful for many people with depression.

Podcasts

Being Well

This podcast by Black Dog Institute: this series interviews people with a lived experience of mental health to tell their stories and talk about how they've flourished and met life's challenges while managing their social and emotional wellbeing.

<https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/education-services/podcasts/being-well-podcast/>

Videos

[Beyond Blue- What is Depression?](#)

[Self-Management Strategies for Depression](#)

Still struggling?

If you are still struggling, reach out to the WSU counselling team for support and advice. If you prefer to seek support from a service outside of the university, it may be helpful to speak to your General Practitioner regarding

a [Mental Health Care Plan](#) and referral to a psychologist, or you can speak to a counsellor or other health professional. Remember you are not alone and there will always be someone out there who is willing to stay with you through your hard times.

Please find the attached PDF document. (insert hyperlink to PDF document summary page)

References

[Healthdirect- Depression](#)

[Beyond Blue- Depression](#)

[Black Dog Institute- Bipolar disorder](#)

[Healthdirect- Seasonal affective disorder](#)

[Postnatal depression](#)

[Postnatal depression in fathers](#)

[ReachOut- Mental health care plan](#)

[Healthdirect- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy](#)

[ReachOut- Self help for depression](#)

[Google Calendar](#)

[Western Sydney University- Are you coping with study?](#)

[Microsoft To Do](#)

[Todoist](#)

[Western Sydney University- Counselling Service](#)

[Western Sydney University- Disability Service](#)

[Western Sydney University- Welfare Service](#)

[Western Sydney University- WesternNow](#)

[Western Sydney University- Chaplaincy](#)

[Western Sydney University- WesternLife](#)

[Western Sydney University- Disruption to Studies](#)

[Western Sydney University- Requests for Extension](#)

[Western Sydney University- Deferred Exam](#)

[Western Sydney University- Student Forms](#)

[Western Sydney University- Withdrawal Without Academic Penalty](#)

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[iBobbly- Apple](#)

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[HeadGear- Apple](#)

[HeadGear- Android](#)

[**Mood Meter- Apple**](#)

[**Mood Meter- Android**](#)

[**Mindshift- Apple**](#)

[**Mindshift- Android**](#)

[**Being Well podcast**](#)

[**YouTube- Beyond Blue- What is Depression?**](#)

[**YouTube- Self-Management Strategies for Depression**](#)

[**Healthdirect- Mental Health Care Plan**](#)