

TOOL KIT Help when you are feeling down

A self-help resource for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are feeling down



Keeping a balanced life

It's important to keep a balance between the good things and the strengths in your lives and the not so good things that worry you and can make you feel down.

Feeling down can manifest itself in different ways: sadness, helplessness, anger, irritability, loneliness and so on. Physical signs can include insomnia or sleeplessness, shifts in diet and weight, and lethargy.

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, then you should seek medical advice.

Understanding what depression is

Depression is a condition that can affect you in the ways listed above. There are many types of depression and many different ways to get back to your old self again.

1 Talk to someone

Talking to other people is a great first step to getting better when you are feeling sad and down. You can talk to a trusted friend, family member, an elder, counsellor, or a support worker.

You can also go for help to your local health centre, your GP, or your Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Service. Even if it turns out that you don't have depression, they can still help you get back on top of things.

2 Do more exercise

Exercise is a very good treatment for depression, sadness and worry. Think about doing more walking during the day or joining the local sports club.

You can ask your local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Service about activities or groups they might be running.

3 Do something that makes you feel good

It is easy to forget to do things you enjoy when you are feeling down. Doing more things that you enjoy can help you feel better. You can try to do something that makes you feel good every day. Everyone enjoys different things: like visiting friends and family, listening to music, drawing or painting, reading, dancing, and learning new skills. You can think about finding out what's happening in the community, join a community group, and getting involved in something you are interested in.

4 Try to get a good sleep

You need to try to get into a regular pattern of going to bed and getting up at around the same time each day. You also need to try to avoid drinking caffeine drinks, eating big meals or doing heavy workouts in the evening.

Ready to help 24/7.

13 11 14

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 Lifeline

5 Get a full check-up from your doctor

It can help to talk to your doctor about how you have been feeling and what has been happening in your life that might be causing you worry and sadness. Sometimes depression and sadness is linked with physical health problems like diabetes or kidney trouble. It is important to ask your doctor to check if there is a medical reason for the way you are feeling and to give you advice about treatment and medication.

6 Limit or cut out the use of alcohol and other drugs

If you are feeling down, alcohol and other drugs can make you feel worse, and can get in the way of your good plans for change and sorting out your problems.

7 Medication

Your doctor may prescribe antidepressant medication. There are many different types which may have different side effects, and some might work better for you than others. If you are taking antidepressants it is important to see your doctor again to talk about how you are going and about possible side effects of the medications.

8 Think positive

There will be days when you are feeling down and when problems tend to be perceived to be worse than they really are. Doctors, psychologists and counsellors are good at teaching skills that help you to think more positively.

9 Try something different

If you find that you are not feeling better, it is important to try something different. You can talk again to a friend, family member, an elder, counsellor, or support worker. You can go for help again to your local health centre or Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Service to talk about what different things you can do. There is always help – you don't have to be alone.

Places to go for help now:

Call Lifeline's 24-hour telephone crisis support service on 13 11 14 or chat to us online lifeline.org.au/crisischat (available every night).

Useful resources

- Visit Lifeline's website to access information and resources www.lifeline.org.au
- Your local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Service
- Local or regional Mental Health service providers
- Aboriginal HealthInfoNet – 'one-stop info-shop' that aims to contribute to 'closing the gap' in health between Indigenous and other Australians www.healthinonet.ecu.edu.au

For 24-hour telephone crisis support call 13 11 14. For more information visit www.lifeline.org.au

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