

## How can family and friends help?

Ask your loved one how you can help. We often think of helping by listening and offering emotional support. This is important, but there are also practical ways we can support someone we love. Practical help like help with caregiving, help with chores around the house, or help preparing meals can be just as powerful.

Supporting someone who is experiencing depression can be hard at times. Seek help for yourself if you need it—support groups for family members and friends can be very helpful.

If you think you or someone you care about is experiencing depression, it's important to seek help. If you ever hear or suspect a loved one wants to harm themselves, seek help right away.

### Aboriginal Crisis Line

1-800-588-8717. This crisis line offers help and support for anyone in BC and it is available day and night every day. You can also access help specifically for adults and Elders or children and youth by calling the same phone number. This crisis line is offered in partnership with the First Nations Health Authority and KUU-US Crisis Response Services.

### Native Youth Crisis Hotline

1-877-209-1266. Available day and night, throughout Canada.

### BC Mental Health Support Line

310-6789 (no area coded needed). They offer confidential help and support at any time of day or night.

### Your family doctor or community health nurse

They can see what might be contributing to the problem, and they can refer you to special services.

### Your Band, Tribal Council, Friendship Centre or other organization

They may offer mental health services and programs.

### The Mood Disorders Association of BC

604-873-0103 or [www.mdabc.net](http://www.mdabc.net). They offer support, education, and treatment programs for mood disorders like depression, and they have a network of support groups around BC.

### Bounce Back: Reclaim Your Health®

[www.bouncebackbc.ca](http://www.bouncebackbc.ca). Bounce Back® is a program that teaches you skills to help you manage low mood, stress, anxiety, and other problems.

### Strengthening Families Together —First Nations Edition

A program from the BC Schizophrenia Society to help families dealing with any mental illness. Visit [www.bcscs.org](http://www.bcscs.org) or call 1-888-888-0029.



*The artwork in this brochure was created by Darren Blaney.*

*This brochure is adapted from work by the First Nations Mental Health Program, Vancouver Community Mental Health Services—Vancouver Coastal Health. We would like to gratefully acknowledge their leadership in developing tailored materials for Aboriginal people.*

[www.heretohelp.bc.ca](http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca)



BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information HeretoHelp is a project of the BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information. The BC Partners are a group of nonprofit agencies working together to help individuals and families manage mental health and substance use problems, with the help of good quality information. We represent Anxiety Disorders Association of BC, BC Schizophrenia Society, Canadian Mental Health Association's BC Division, Centre for Addictions Research of BC, FORCE Society for Kids' Mental Health, Jessie's Legacy Program at Family Services of the North Shore, and Mood Disorders Association of BC. The BC Partners are funded by BC Mental Health and Addiction Services, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority.

2016



## depression

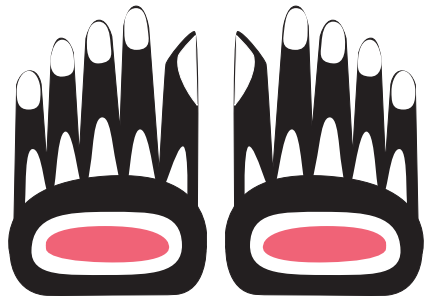
### a guide for aboriginal people

[www.heretohelp.bc.ca](http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca)



## What is depression?

Depression affects your mood—the way you feel. It's normal to feel sad or upset from time to time. Depression is more than just a bad day. It's a mental illness that makes it hard to go about your daily life and do things you enjoy. It lasts for a long time and it can have a big impact on your life.



Depression affects all cultures. It affects people on reserve and off reserve, in rural communities or large cities.

## What causes depression?

Depression may be caused by many different things. Some factors that may contribute to depression or make depression worse include:

- Changes in the brain
- Chronic physical illness like diabetes or heart disease
- Family history of depression or other mental illnesses
- Experiences of racism
- History of trauma or abuses, such as the residential school system
- Trauma going on right now or other distressing events in your life
- Losing or feeling disconnected from culture, language, spiritual beliefs, traditions, ways of living, or other important parts of your identity
- Health of the community—such as job opportunities, access to services and resources, support networks, living conditions, and quality of life
- Problems with alcohol or other drugs

## What are the symptoms of depression?

Everyone has their own experience of depression, but common symptoms include:

- Feeling down, sad, or hopeless much of the time
- Feeling like a failure, feeling unreasonably guilty, or blaming yourself for things you can't control
- Feeling irritable, angry, or on edge—even over minor problems
- Feeling very tired much of the time
- Losing interest in things you usually enjoy
- Having a hard time concentrating, making decisions, or remembering things
- Changes in your sleep patterns—sleeping a lot more or a lot less than usual
- Changes in your eating patterns—eating a lot more or a lot less than usual
- Physical complaints like headaches or stomach aches
- Having thoughts of ending your life or hurting yourself

## Can depression be treated?

Yes, depression is very treatable. Depression is usually treated with counselling, medicine, or a combination of medicine and counselling. Talk to your doctor if you have any questions

or concerns about the medicine that you are prescribed. Tell your doctor about other treatments you are using, including herbs. For less severe depression, counselling may be all that's needed. Many people worry about talking to a doctor about a mental health problem. You can find tips on working with doctors at [www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/managing-depression](http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/factsheet/managing-depression).

A big part of recovery is finding healthy balance. Good support from family, friends, Elders, faith communities, or support groups can make a big difference. There are many things you can try on your own, too. Small changes like getting enough sleep, eating well, connecting to nature, and regular exercise can really help. Pay attention to how you use alcohol or other drugs, and talk to your doctor or health care provider if you're having a hard time managing substance use. If you are interested in traditional healing practices, reach out to your community for suggestions and advice.

Remember that this medical way of thinking about depression is not the only way to understand your experiences. Seek advice from people you respect—they may have perspectives or ideas that help you on your own journey.

