



REGAINING MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

In South Africa, lifestyle, time and financial pressures, crime, work stress and political uncertainty contribute to the increase in depression and anxiety. If depression is left untreated it can significantly diminish a person's ability to function, both in their personal and work life. In the worst-case scenario, depression may even lead to suicide.

South African suicide statistics are alarming. Studies done by University of KwaZulu-Natal researcher Lourens Schlebusch, a suicidologist, medico-legal and stress management consultant, revealed an estimated 7582 suicides in South Africa per annum.

The shocking statistic has SA ranked as the country with the eighth highest suicide rate in the world. Stress and depression are said to be the leading causes.



Dr Frans Korb, Psychiatrist and Psychologist said: "Depression and anxiety are some of the most common mental illnesses in the country. Many

people go undiagnosed and untreated because they don't know the signs and symptoms, and suffer in silence for years."

Anxiety and depression

Depression may be described as feeling sad, blue, unhappy, miserable, or down in the dumps. Most of us feel this way at one time or another for short periods.

Clinical depression is a mood disorder in which feelings of sadness, loss, anger, or frustration interfere with everyday life for weeks or more. Anxiety is a nervous disorder characterized by a state of excessive uneasiness and apprehension.

Counsellor and organizational wellbeing consultant Gisela Hiestermaann explains, "It is entirely normal to experience some of the symptoms of depression and anxiety in daily life. When these become a pattern of symptoms that interfere with one's day-to-day functioning, and

last over a long period of several weeks or months, it is time to get help.

Getting help

Rather than trying to hide depression or ignore the signs, it is essential to seek help. Gisela adds, "The goals of treatment for include relieving the symptoms and achieving a level of adaptation that is comparable to a person's level of functioning before the stressful event."



Counselling, therapy and anti-depressant medication are all possible treatment routes and a healthcare professional or a counsellor at the dti Counselling and Support Programme will be able to advise about finding the right help and/or refer you to an appropriate healthcare professional.

RELAXING

Surround yourself with positive people and influences.



EXERCISE

Get regular exercise



HOBBY

Try to do the things you remember enjoying before the onset of your depression.

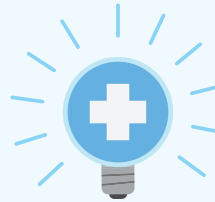


Be patient and kind to yourself. Depression is not your fault and is not something you can overcome with willpower alone. Treatment is necessary for depression, just like for any other illness.



POSITIVE THINKING

Try to maintain a positive attitude - remember that feeling better takes time, and your mood will improve little by little.



Get as much information as you can about depression or anxiety, so that you know what you are dealing with and you can take control of your life and your recovery.

DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY: HELPING YOURSELF

Broadly defined, a person experiencing good mental health generally feels comfortable with themselves and their relationships, and they feel capable of meeting life's demands. The South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) offers these self-help tips for returning to good mental health or preventing future depressive episodes:

- Get up and get dressed everyday - even if you are not doing anything.
- Get adequate sleep.
- Follow a routine and keep it stress free if possible. This will keep you engaged with reality, help you to cope and get through the days.
- Make sure you eat a balanced diet. If you lack an appetite, eat small snacks rather than large meals.
- Avoid drinking alcohol or using illegal drugs or medications that have not been prescribed for you. They may interfere with your medications or make your depression worse.
- Even if you don't feel motivated, try to participate in religious, social or other activities.
- Keep a journal and write your feelings down. This is cathartic and will help put things into perspective.
- Accept help.
- Share your feelings with someone.
- Set realistic goals for yourself and take on a reasonable amount of responsibility, even if it is just around the home like cooking or shopping, or ironing.
- Break large tasks into small ones and set priorities. Do what you can when you are able.
- Postpone major life decisions such as changing jobs, moving or getting married or divorced when you are depressed.
- Think about your future and the things you would like to accomplish. It will give you positive things to plan for and look forward to achieving.
- Keep yourself busy to prevent dwelling on negative and upsetting things.
- Volunteer - helping others will put your own life into perspective, keep you engaged with life and give you a reason to feel good about yourself.
- Join a support group. If there is no group in your area consider starting a group in your area, with help from **SADAG (0800 567 567)**.
- Contact your **employee wellbeing programme for advice, support and guidance**.

Call your employee wellbeing programme for more information
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