

*Separated parents
and tough times*





Taking care
of yourself is
important



Major changes in relationships, such as separation, can be a trigger for depression. That's why the Child Support Agency and *beyondblue: the national depression initiative* have joined forces to raise awareness of:

- the risks and impact of depression on separating parents
- the importance of looking after yourself
- where to go for help.

Separation can be a tough time. Parents who are separating face big changes in their life, such as:

- moving house
- spending more or less time with their children
- having less money to spend.

They may also go through stages of feeling angry, guilty, lonely or uncertain about the future.

Taking care of yourself is important—for you—and for those around you.



Getting through the tough times

There are a number of things you can do to help get through difficult times.

- **Get into a new routine**—put aside enough time to manage new household and child care arrangements.
- **Get support**—identify friends, family and support groups.
- **Stay healthy**—eat healthy meals, exercise regularly, get a good night's sleep and avoid drugs and alcohol. This will help both physical fitness and mental health.
- **Learn to manage stress**—simple things, like keeping a diary of feelings and practising breathing and muscle-relaxation techniques can help.
- **Take time out**—make an effort to participate in enjoyable activities.

What is depression?

How to tell if you're depressed and not just sad

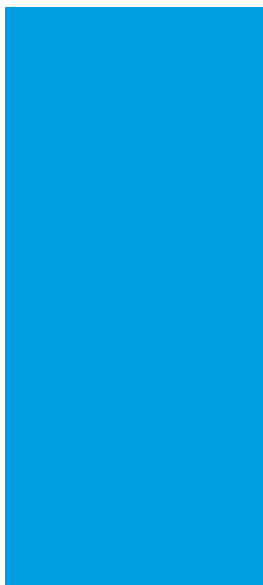
Sometimes it can be hard to know whether you are just feeling down because of all the changes, or you have symptoms of depression.

Depression checklist

You may be depressed if for more than **TWO WEEKS** you have:

- Felt sad, down or miserable most of the time.
- Lost interest or pleasure in most of your usual activities.

If the answer is **YES** to either of these questions, complete the symptom checklist on the next page.
If the answer is **NOT** yes to either of these questions, it is unlikely that you have a depressive illness.



Have you:

- Lost or gained a lot of weight OR
Had a decrease or increase in appetite.
- Had disturbed sleep.
- Felt slowed down, restless or excessively busy.
- Felt tired or had no energy.
- Felt worthless OR
Felt excessively guilty OR
Felt guilty about things you should not feel guilty about.
- Had poor concentration OR
Had difficulties thinking OR
Been very indecisive.
- Had recurrent thoughts of death.

Add up the number of ticks for the total score: _____

It's important to note that scores provide only a rough guide as to whether someone has depression. If you have ticked five or more of these statements, you should consult a health professional.

*... it can be hard to know
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What puts a person at risk of depression?

There are a number of factors that can lead to a person developing depression. These include:

- family conflict
- interpersonal conflict
- recent losses and disappointment.

As well as adjusting to life after separation, the risk of depression may be increased by:

- a family history of mental health problems
- drug and alcohol abuse
- brain and chemical changes
- other medical illnesses or treatments
- personality type.

How common is depression?

Depression is very common. About one million Australian adults live with depression each year. On average, one in eight men and one in five women will experience depression in their adult lifetime.

Treatment for depression

It is important to remember that depression is a treatable illness that you can recover from. There is a range of effective treatments including:

Psychological treatments—help a person to change negative thoughts and feelings and learn new ways to react to people and situations. This can help recovery and prevent depression from returning.

Medication—depression is often associated with an imbalance of certain chemicals in the brain and, for some people, medication may be required. Antidepressant medication helps rebalance these chemicals. Antidepressants can take 7–21 days to work effectively and should not be started or stopped without medical advice.



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*... depression
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Where to get help

- A doctor who is a General Practitioner (GP) is a good first step. In some cases, you may be referred to a mental health specialist like a psychiatrist or psychologist. For a list of GPs, and other health professionals with expertise in treating depression, anxiety and related drug and alcohol problems visit **www.beyondblue.org.au** and click on Find a Practitioner.
- Psychiatrists are doctors who specialise in mental health. They can make medical and psychological assessments, conduct medical tests and prescribe medication. Some psychiatrists use psychological treatments. To see a psychiatrist, you need to get a referral from a GP.
- Psychologists specialise in providing non-medical (psychological) treatment for depression and related disorders. To find a psychologist go to **www.beyondblue.org.au** and click on Find a Practitioner.

More information about depression

beyondblue: the national depression initiative

beyondblue info line

1300 224 636

Information on depression, anxiety and related alcohol and drug problems, available treatments and referral only.

www.beyondblue.org.au

Information on depression, anxiety and related alcohol and drug problems, available treatments and where to get help.

www.youthbeyondblue.com

beyondblue's website for young people—information on depression and how to help a friend.

Other useful contacts

Mensline Australia

1300 789 978

National 24 hour support for men facing challenges as a result of family breakdown or separation. This service is funded by FaCSIA and is staffed by professional counsellors at the cost of a local call. Information, referral and call back service is also available.

www.menslineaus.org.au

Suicide Helpline Victoria

1300 651 251 (Victoria only)

24 hour counselling, crisis intervention, information and referral.

www.suicidehelpline.org.au

Lifeline

131 114

24 hour counselling.

www.lifeline.org.au

... about separation

Child Support Agency

The Child Support Agency (CSA) works to ensure that children can rely on their parents for the financial and emotional support they require for their wellbeing. Separation can be a difficult time for families and CSA is committed to working with others to provide support and services to separated parents. CSA has a range of products and services to help parents dealing with separation including:

- *Dealing with Separation* — an interactive CD where people share their experiences of separation.
- *Me and My* series of booklets — tips and hints on:
 - building relationships with children and ex-partners
 - money issues
 - emotional well-being
 - new relationships.
- *Staying Connected Program* — a workplace program providing strategies and solutions for separated dads to stay connected with their children. For more information contact stayingconnected@csa.gov.au

To order free CSA products and publications visit www.csa.gov.au or call **1800 040 972**.

For information about child support contact **131 272**.

Other useful contacts

Family Relationship Advice Line

1800 050 321

People from families affected by relationship or separation issues can get information and referral to support services, and advice about parenting arrangements after separation.

Family Relationships Online

Provides information about parenting arrangements after separation and about services that are available to help.

www.familyrelationships.gov.au

Other useful contacts ... cont.

Relationships Australia

1300 364 277

Relationships Australia offers counselling, family dispute resolution, family violence programs, parenting and relationships courses and other relationship services; across Australia.

www.relationships.com.au



Australian Government
Child Support Agency

CSA... supporting separated families.



beyondblue

the national depression initiative
www.beyondblue.org.au

