



## University Counseling Center The George Washington University

2033 K Street, NW, Suite 330 • 202.994.5300 • <http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel>

**D**epression. College can be an exciting time — with new emotions, new experiences, and new challenges — but it can also be a confusing time, filled with anxiety, uncertainty, and difficulties. Leaving family and friends, moving to a new city, meeting new people, and facing new academic challenges can easily contribute to feeling lonely and overwhelmed. For some, these feelings disappear after a short time. For others, however, these feelings linger, and thoughts of returning home, transferring schools, escaping, or even ending life may occur. If these feelings persist, they can leave an individual feeling confused and scared.



If you are experiencing these or other symptoms of depression, **you are not alone**. Almost everyone experiences depression at some point in life. However, it is important to know when to get help and that **you can do something about depression**.

### Signs and Symptoms of Depression

While everyone's experience of depression is unique, the following symptoms are common:

#### Physical

Poor appetite or overeating  
Low energy or fatigue  
Sleep disturbances

#### Psychological

Feeling hopeless  
Low self-esteem  
Self-critical thoughts  
Feeling that no one values you  
Feeling no purpose to existence  
Recurring thoughts of death

#### Emotional

Feeling sad, empty, alone, or hopeless  
Excessive crying  
Feeling more tense or anxious than usual  
Excessive worrying  
Overreacting to situations

#### Academic

Decreased motivation  
Difficulty concentrating

#### Social

Decreased interest in activities you enjoy  
Decreased trust in others  
Easily irritated  
Wanting to spend time alone  
Difficulty relating to people

**If you identify with some of the symptoms described above and are concerned that you might be depressed, please call the UCC (202.994.5300) and ask to set up an appointment with a counselor.**

### Coping with Depression

- \* **Challenge the negative thoughts in your head.** Depression can make you feel alone or worthless. You might find yourself thinking that nothing good ever happens, that no one cares about you, or that things will never get better. Realize that these thoughts are coming from depression — not you.
- \* **Be aware of your stress levels.** Now is not the time to be taking on new projects and responsibilities. Consider paring down what you're doing to make your schedule more manageable.
- \* **Take care of your body.** Try to eat nutritious meals, get exercise, and get enough sleep (7-8 hours a night).

- \* **Surround yourself with supportive people.** Friends who have a negative outlook will only make you feel more negative.
- \* **Take life one day at a time.** Don't get consumed with thoughts of the future: make small goals and don't think about the whole semester. Try to add more structure to your life.
- \* **Avoid alcohol.** It is a depressant, and will only amplify your depressive feelings.
- \* **Become involved** – don't take on a huge commitment, but try to find something you enjoy. Volunteering to help others might help you to focus more on positive things.
- \* **Remember depression is treatable.** You may need to talk with a counselor, but you can overcome depression.
- \* **Express your feelings.** Don't keep your emotions bottled up. Find a way to experience feelings that is comfortable for you – talk to someone (friend, family member, counselor, religious leader, professor, etc.), write in a journal, go to a support group.

## Helping a Friend Who is Depressed

1. **Be supportive.** Listen to your friend. Set aside time so that you can talk without being interrupted. Let your friend know that you care and are willing to help.
2. Introduce your friend to **copng techniques** such as those suggested above. If these don't seem to help, suggest that your friend seek professional help. You may wish to come to the UCC to find resources for your friend.
3. Understand that your friend is suffering from **depression**. Your friend won't just "snap out of it." Overcoming depression takes work and time.
4. Remember to **take care of yourself**. Being there for your friend should not come at the expense of your own health, physical or mental. If you are overwhelmed, take a step back and consider calling a counselor for advice.



## Services and Resources for Depression

The UCC offers a number of services for students experiencing depression:

- \* **Individual counseling:** Students can see a counselor for brief therapy to work on issues related to depression. Sessions usually occur on a weekly basis.
- \* **Group Therapy:** The UCC offers many groups, including *Seniors in Transition*, *Sexual Assault Survivors*, and *Interpersonal Growth*.
- \* **Learning Skills and Self-Help Resources:** Students can peruse pamphlets, books, tapes, and videotapes on depression, bipolar disorder, and many other topics.
- \* **Workshops** are offered throughout the year on various topics, including depression. See the UCC's website for upcoming workshops.
- \* **Referrals** are available for therapists in the community, for mental health agencies, and for other campus and community resources.
- \* **The UCC website (<http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel>)** has up-to-date information on services offered by the UCC (i.e., depression workshops), as well as links to related topics.
- \* **Call-A-Counselor 24/7:** Students may contact the UCC anytime, day or night, to speak to a counselor about their mental health concerns, including depression. Just call 202.994.5300.

## Other Campus Resources

**For emergencies, call the University Police Department** (Foggy Bottom campus 202.994.6111, Mount Vernon campus 202.242.6111) or proceed directly to the nearest hospital.

**Disability Support Services (DSS):** Students diagnosed with depression or a mood disorder can enroll with DSS to request accommodations or to access academic support resources. Contact DSS at 202.994.8250 to obtain further information.