

MEN AND DEPRESSION



Mental Health Foundation
mauri tū, mauri ora OF NEW ZEALAND

"I was still functioning – just not as well as I used to. I just felt a bit flat and irritable. I suppose I really didn't think it was bad enough to do anything about it.

I talked to my GP about how I was feeling. They prescribed me with medication. I also made an effort to get more active and connect with people. After a time, I started to feel like myself again."

Man with experience of depression

What is depression?

Depression is a feeling of ongoing pōuritanga/unhappiness. It is more than feeling blue or down for a short time – it can affect how you feel and behave for weeks or longer.

Depression is common and can affect all ages, genders, cultures and socio-economic groups.

It is a serious health issue that you should attend to. It is not something you can just snap out of, but it can be treated, and you are entitled to the help you need.

Recognising depression in men

Depression is common in men, but it is not always recognised or diagnosed.

Sometimes, depression in men can look different to what you might expect, and you might feel angry or irritable instead of sad.

Some men find it difficult to ask for help, but if you think that you might be experiencing depression, it is important to reach out for support.

Risk factors for depression in men

Depression is a common experience – many people experience it at times in their lives. You may be more at risk if you live with the following risk factors, but with help and support, you can feel better. Risk factors include:

- previous experience of depression
- having a whānau member who has been depressed
- living with addictions
- chronic health problems
- work stress, money worries
- major life changes, like separation or divorce, retirement or unemployment
- feeling lonely or isolated
- coming out or navigating sexual orientation or gender identity.

How do men experience depression?

There are several signs and symptoms of depression. Some people will experience many symptoms, while others will experience just a few.

Men who are depressed may be more aware of physical symptoms in their body rather than emotional symptoms. You may:

- feel tired or lack energy
- feel irritable, restless or on edge
- feel angry or hostile towards others
- withdraw from whānau and friends
- lose interest in work and things you used to enjoy
- feel dejected, empty or numb
- have trouble sleeping or oversleep
- get headaches, other aches and pains, or digestive issues
- lose interest in sex
- experience changes in appetite or weight
- feel guilty, embarrassed or ashamed
- have difficulty thinking clearly, concentrating or making decisions, or become forgetful
- have suicidal thoughts or thoughts of death
- drink too much alcohol or use drugs
- engage in risky behaviour, such as dangerous driving.

Remember recovery takes time, but with the right support, you can find a way through.



What treatment is available?

Depression can be treated, allowing you to live a full life. Treatment is usually a combination of two or more of the following:

- **talking therapy**, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Interpersonal Therapy or Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)
- **medication**, such as antidepressants
- **lifestyle changes**, including focusing on nutrition, physical movement and sleep
- **traditional medicine**, such as rongoā.

Getting help

Your general practitioner (GP) or Māori hauora/health provider can help you find the right treatment and support. They can also give you a check up and make sure that there aren't any physical health issues that could be affecting how you feel.

Other people who can support you include:

- friends or whānau
- your local Citizens Advice Bureau
- marae and culturally-based community support services
- work employee assistance programmes (EAP), which are free for employees
- religious or spiritual support services.

There are also helplines where you can discuss things anonymously:

- free call or text **1737** to talk with a trained counsellor (24/7)
- Depression Helpline: call **0800 111 757** or text 4202 (24/7)
- Lifeline: call **0800 LIFELINE** (0800 543 354) or text **HELP** (4357) (7am – midnight)
- Youthline: call **0800 376 633** or free text **234** (24/7).

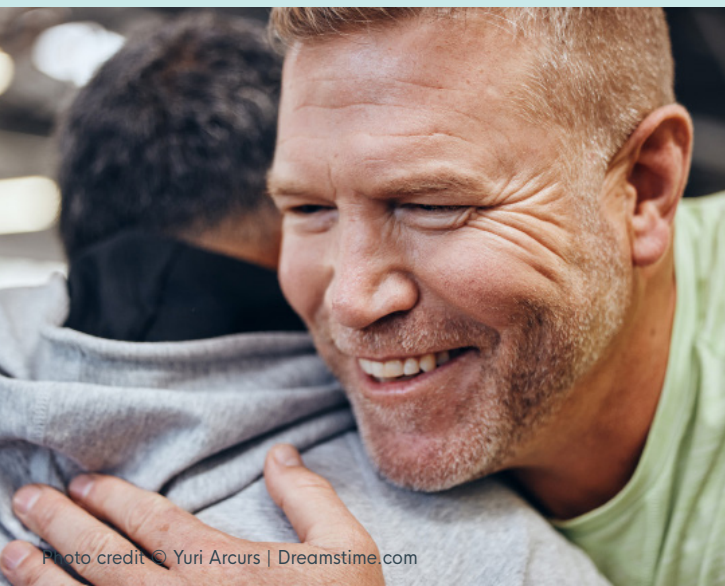
"I was down for ages after we broke up. After a while I knew I was over it and ready to move on, but no matter what I did, the sadness wouldn't go away."

Man with experience of depression

Helping yourself

As well as seeking treatment, there are small actions you can take to help you feel your best. Remember that improvement is usually gradual and happens over time, so be patient with yourself.

- Tell a partner, close friend or whānau member how you are feeling. Keep trying to reach out to others.
- Move your tinana/body. Get outdoors if you can.
- Eat a nutritious, well-balanced diet.
- Keep a regular sleep routine.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Do things you enjoy. Join a sports team, kapa haka group or choir, or spend time gardening, woodworking, playing music or making art.
- Check in with yourself and notice how you're feeling. If you're feeling stressed, take time out to re-focus. Taking a short break – maybe with music, exercise or outdoors – can help you feel better.
- Learn more about depression and strategies that can help. **Healthify.nz** and **depression.org.nz** are good sources of information. **Smallsteps.org.nz**, **justathought.co.nz** or the Groov app at **www.groovnow.com** offer self-care and learning programmes.



Connect with others

Peer support groups can connect you with others who have similar experiences.

Find group listings here: mentalhealth.org.nz/groups

Five Ways to Wellbeing

The Five Ways to Wellbeing are simple, proven actions that can make a real difference to your life.

Practising the Five Ways to Wellbeing every day helps you feel more balanced and supports your mental health.

For ideas and inspiration visit mentalhealth.org.nz/wellbeing



Resources

The Mental Health Foundation has a range of free mental health and wellbeing information and resources. Visit www.mentalhealth.org.nz

Find us online

Find out more about our work:



resource@mentalhealth.org.nz



www.mentalhealth.org.nz



[mhfnz](https://www.instagram.com/mhfnz)



[mentalhealthfoundationNZ](https://www.facebook.com/mentalhealthfoundationNZ)

We need your help

To create free resources like this, we rely on the generosity of people like you. Donate now to support our work uplifting the mental health of all New Zealanders.



Please give today at donate.mentalhealth.org.nz

The Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand 2021, last updated May 2026.

This resource was produced with input from many people. Special thanks go to Dougal Sutherland and Natasha de Faria (www.best-practice.co.nz).