



# Depression

**This is a common condition that may be diagnosed when a person has been feeling down and worried—and has lost pleasure in daily activities—for more than two weeks.**

## What is it?

The symptoms of depression can include continuous low mood or sadness, having low self-esteem, feeling hopeless and helpless, being tearful, feeling guilt-ridden, and being irritable and intolerant of others.

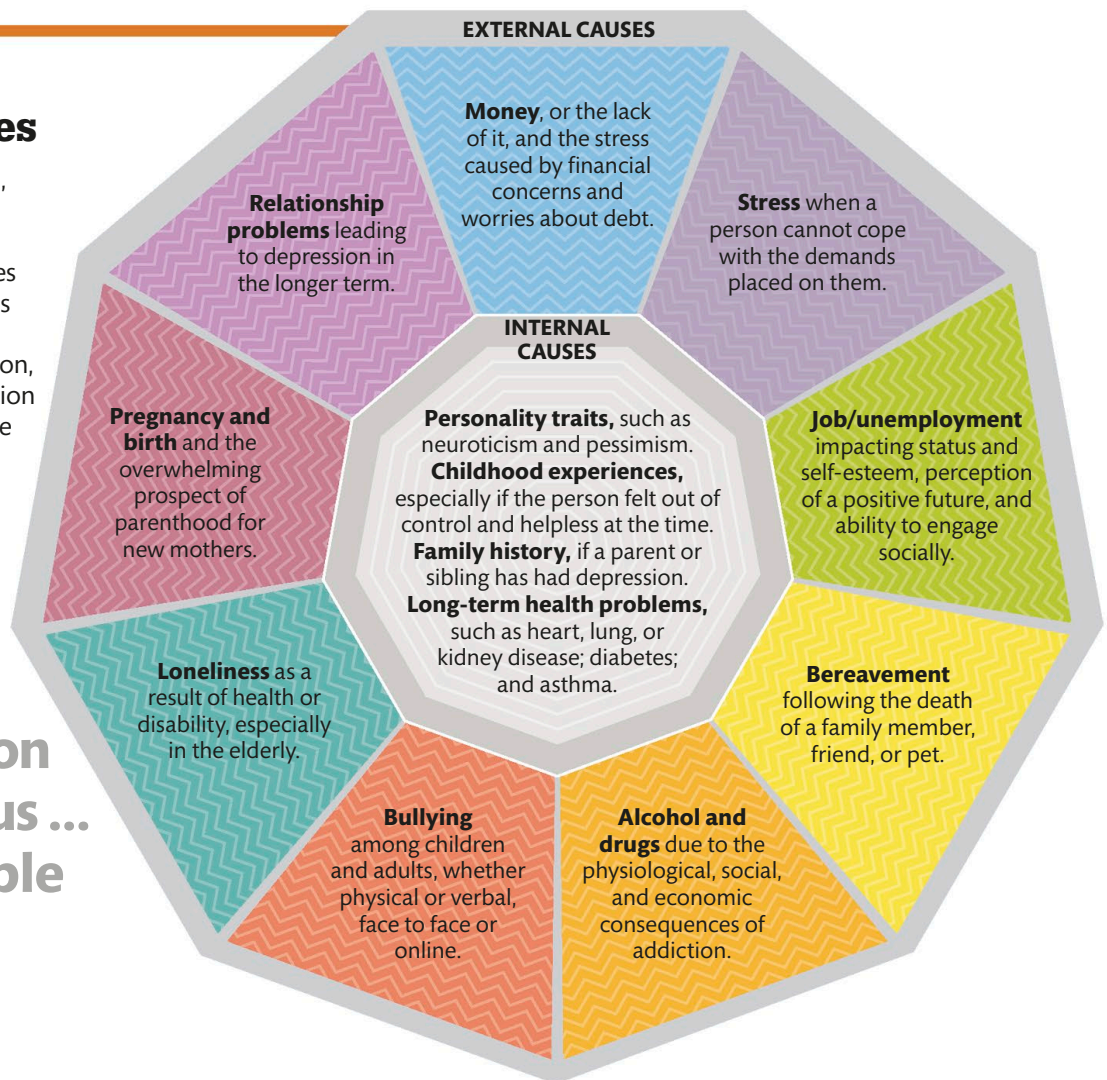
A person with depression is unmotivated and uninterested, finds it difficult to make decisions, and takes no enjoyment from life. As a result, the individual may avoid the social events that they usually enjoy, thus missing out on social interaction, which can cause

a vicious circle which sees them spiraling further downward.

Depression can make it difficult for a person to concentrate and remember things. In extreme cases the sense of hopelessness may lead to thoughts of self-harm or even suicide.

## Internal and external causes

A wide range of biological, social, and environmental factors can cause depression. External causes predominantly encompass life events that can have a negative impact on a person, and often act in combination with internal causes—those within an individual—to trigger depression.



**“... depression is so insidious ... it’s impossible to ever see the end.”**

Elizabeth Wurtzel,  
American author



Many internal and external factors (left), such as childhood experiences and life events, physical illness, or injury, can cause depression. It can be mild, moderate, or severe and is extremely common—according to the World Health Organization, more than 350 million people suffer from it globally.

### How is it diagnosed?

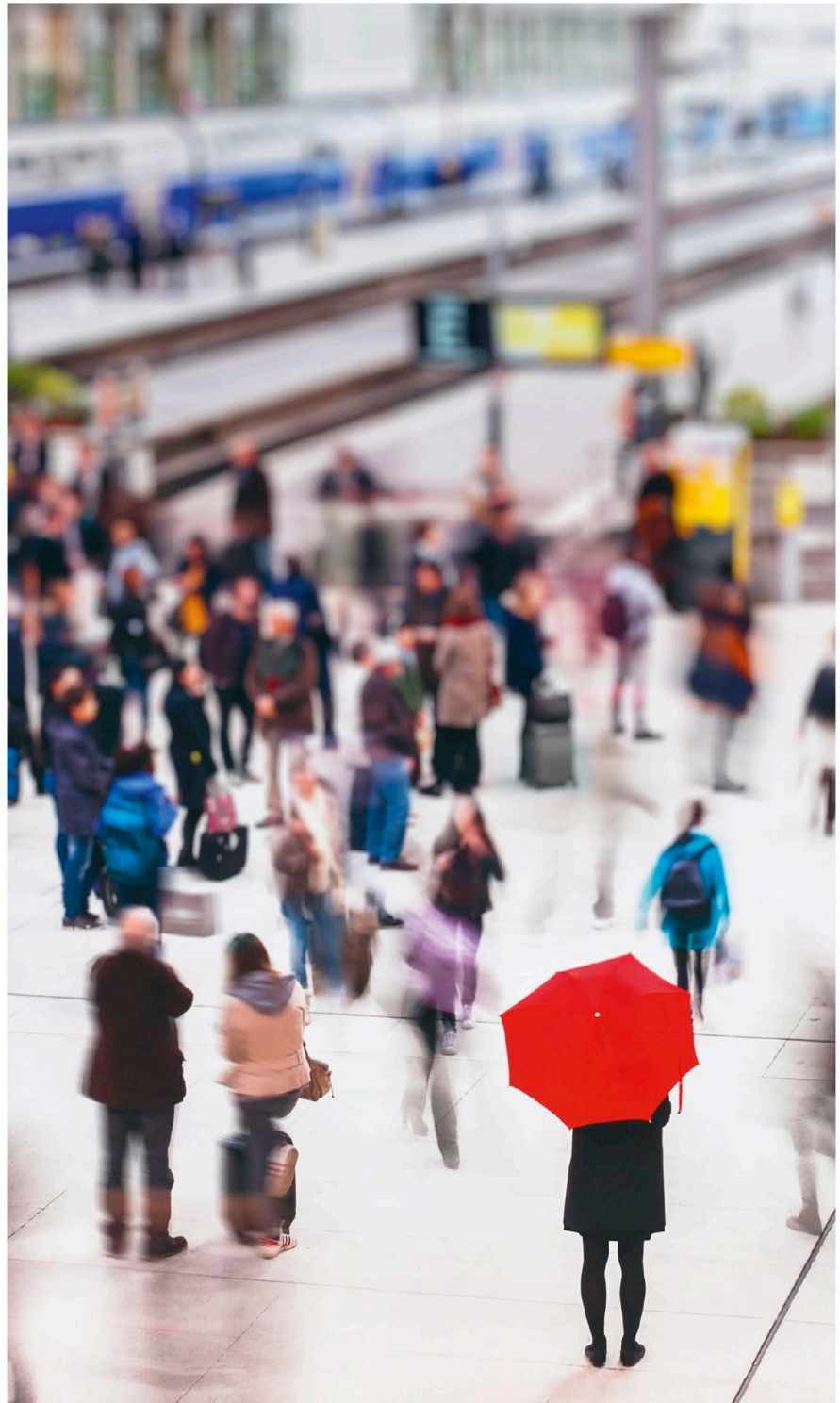
A doctor can diagnose by asking the person questions about their particular symptoms. One objective is to find out how long the symptoms have been going on. The doctor may also suggest blood tests to rule out any other illness that may cause the symptoms of depression.

Subsequent treatment depends on the severity of the depression, but the main option is to undergo psychotherapy. Antidepressants may be offered to help the person cope with everyday life. For mild to moderate depression, exercise can be helpful. In severe cases, hospital admission or medication for psychotic symptoms (pp.70–75) may be needed.



### TREATMENT

- › **Cognitive and behavioral therapies** such as behavioral activation, cognitive behavioral therapy (p.125), compassion focused, acceptance and commitment (p.126), and cognitive (p.124) therapies.
- › **Psychodynamic psychotherapy** (pp.118–121) and counseling.
- › **Antidepressants** (pp.142–143) on their own or alongside therapy.



**FEELINGS OF LONELINESS** result from depression and cause a person to feel completely alone, helpless, and isolated.