

### **When 'Depression' is not just about the economy**

Feeling sad or finding it difficult to see the positives in our lives, are common to all of us from time to time. The term 'Depression' is used to describe a wide spectrum of experiences from feeling a bit low, to the grief and despair following a death or loss of a loved one, to more severe forms, where the individual experiences periods of overwhelming sadness, numbness, and hopelessness, finding it difficult to carry out day to day functions, and loss of interest in activities that were once pleasurable.



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In cases of severe depression, it is important that the individual visits their GP to discuss the treatment options available.

Therapy (psychotherapy and counselling) provides support and help to those experiencing depression. In therapy the client and the therapist work together to gain an understanding of what is happening for the individual, building a picture of the persons' life, so that the current experiences can be seen in context.

Some of the approaches that the therapist may use when working with a client experiencing depression include:

- The therapist will help the client explore his/her life, looking at how events in the past, particularly those that have involved loss or disappointment have impacted on the client creating feelings of sadness or anger which may not have been consciously experienced or acknowledged by the client.
- Using a Cognitive-Behavioural approach where the client keeps a record of negative thoughts that are then reviewed in the session. The underlying assumptions that give rise to these thoughts are explored and challenged and more rational or positive explanations are offered.
- Developing awareness of the factors that may give rise to depressive episodes in the future and exploring coping mechanisms.

In many cases, the therapist will use a combination of approaches to suit the individual needs of the client. The most important part of successful therapy is based on building a good relationship, that is respectful and trusting, between the client and therapist.

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