

Helping students who are withdrawn and depressed

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| | <p>> A student, who seems to be withdrawn, may be experiencing depression. This can have an impact on studying, for example causing changes in behaviour, such as having difficulty in concentrating or completing work on time.</p> <p>Attendance may decline and the student may experience feelings of academic failure and of everything being too much of an effort. Support is therefore very important to try and help the student and prevent them from 'giving up'. Most periods of depression will clear up by themselves, but there are things that can help which tutors can recommend.</p> |
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Symptoms of Depression

- > The Student can experience low moods, but if they continue for more than two weeks this is probably a sign of depression.
- > Depression affects about 1 in 6 adults at some time in their lives and can be mild, moderate or severe.
- > If one or two of the symptoms below apply, it may not mean that the student is seriously depressed. The key thing about depression is that a lot of the symptoms apply most or all of the time and stop people from getting on with their lives.
- > Symptoms of depression:
 - Wanting to stay in bed all day
 - Self neglect
 - Lack of energy
 - Feelings like helplessness, sadness, anger, worry
 - Being irritable most of the time
 - Losing interest in other people (including sex)
 - Changes in eating and/or sleeping patterns
 - Difficulty in concentrating/being forgetful
 - Negative thoughts, e.g. "I am a failure"
 - Thinking about self-harm or death

What can help?

- > Tutors can help by offering support in:
 - Acknowledging the signs of depression,
 - Showing understanding,
 - Encouraging activity
 - Referring the student to sources of support.
- > Regular exercise. (This can help with mild depression by stimulating the chemical production of endorphins which create a sense of well-being.)
- > A good diet
- > A regular sleep routine (continued...)

- > Avoiding heavy drinking and other drug use
- > Talking about it to friends, family or a counsellor
- > Planning something positive to look forward to
- > Keeping a diary of things that have gone well
- > A 'light-box' can help improve energy levels with students affected by Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) or the 'Winter Blues'. (The Counselling and Personal Support Service has a light-box to try out.)
- > For moderate to severe depression, anti-depressant medication can help. Encourage students to see their GP about this.
- > Financial help is potentially available through the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). For more information contact the Mental Health Adviser or Disability Unit (contact details below).

Useful Contacts

- > **Counselling and Personal Support** can help students who experience mild to moderate depression. In more severe cases a Mental Health Adviser is available in the team who can identify appropriate forms of assistance. As well as face to face support, there is a range of self-help books on depression which can be loaned, a light-box and e-mail support. An interactive self-help computer program is also available called 'Beating the Blues'.
- > For an **appointment with a counsellor or Mental Health Adviser**
 - Telephone Leicester (0116) 2577602
 - E-mail: counselling@dmu.ac.uk
- > Or for advice, information or support via email contact 121@dmu.ac.uk.
- > **The Centre for Learning and Study Support (CLASS)** provides study support tutorials and a range of learning materials which can help with areas such as time management.
- > **CLASS** study support tutorials can be booked via
 - email: class@dmu.ac.uk
 - telephone: (0116) 257 7042
- > Learning materials can be found at: www.skills.dmu.ac.uk

Contact:

- > **The Centre for Learning and Study Support**
 - > Ground Floor
 - > Kimberlin Library
 - > Tel; 0116 207 7042
 - > Email: class@dmu.ac.uk
 - > Web www.skills.dmu.ac.uk
 - > For possible financial help through the Disabled Students' Allowance contact the **Disability Unit**
 - > Telephone : (0116) 257 7593 or 2577595
 - > Email disability@dmu.ac.uk
- http://www.dmu.ac.uk/study/student_services/disability/index.jsp

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| | > Further information: |
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Reference material

- > The following resources are all available from **Counselling and Personal Support**
- > Mind leaflet (2005) 'Understanding Depression'
www.mind.org.uk/Information/Booklets.
- > Ernst, E. (1999) **Depression**. Godsfield Press Ltd. Alresford. Hants
- > Gilbert, P. (2000 2nd edition) **Overcoming Depression**. Constable and Robinson Ltd. London.
- > Harwood, J. (1998 6th edition) **Comfort for Depression**. George Allen and Unwin. London.
- > **"What is Depression"** – leaflet available from the Student Learning Advisory Service. Email slas@dmu.ac.uk

Web sites

- > www.studentdepression.org
- > www.cwmt.org (The Charlie Waller Memorial Trust)
- > www.thesite.org.uk/healthandwellbeing/mentalhealth/depression

Other related Focus On titles

- > Difficult One-to-one Meetings
- > Mental Health Problems
- > The impact of Stress on Learning
- > Understanding Suicidal Behaviour
- > Helping students who self-harm