



Depression is not a normal part of growing older

Growing older is a positive experience for many people and for some, it's a time of life with new freedom and opportunities to travel, spend time with friends and family and explore new interests.

As we age, we do face some challenges too. We may start to notice changes in our physical health. We may feel socially isolated and lonely, and many of us may have experienced grief following the deaths of friends and loved ones. We might feel too that we are losing our independence and our lifestyle. Challenges like these may contribute to people developing depression, but it's important to remember that depression is not something which is inevitable as we get older.

Some people may feel that losing interest in activities they used to enjoy, unexplained aches and pains, sleeping problems, changes in weight, losing memory and feeling confused or wanting to stay home all the time are normal by-products of getting older – but sometimes, these may be signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety.

How common are anxiety and depression?

Anxiety and depression are common treatable illnesses. Over one million Australian adults live with depression each year and over two million have an anxiety disorder.

Why is it important people learn about anxiety and depression and their effects?

Often, anxiety and depression are not recognised and therefore remain undiagnosed....and if left untreated, both these conditions can seriously affect people's physical and mental health. With early diagnosis and appropriate treatment, the impact of these illnesses can be reduced. Unfortunately, many people don't recognise the symptoms of anxiety and depression and do not seek treatment.

CEO of *beyondblue*, Dawn O'Neil, says there is no reason anyone of any age should think that depression is a normal life stage.

"Depression can affect anyone at any time and we know that older people can sometimes feel ashamed to talk about it and ask for help," she said.

"If people have noticed changes in mood, physical symptoms or have been feeling generally out-of-sorts for more than two weeks, it's a good idea to talk about it with your General Practitioner. Unfortunately, depression doesn't always go away by itself. We really need to get the message out that depression and anxiety disorders are health problems – just like diabetes or high blood pressure – and they can be managed and treated. In most cases, if people get the right treatment, they recover. Talking about how you're feeling with a health professional is a good first step.

“You can also call the *beyondblue* information line - **1300 22 4636** - to find out more about the signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety, and where to go for assistance. You can visit our website at www.beyondblue.org.au too.”

***beyond maturityblues* peer education sessions**

beyondblue works to raise awareness of depression and anxiety among older people and is particularly focused on letting people know that help is available. *beyondblue* and Councils on the Ageing (COTAs) across Australia have teamed up to deliver free educational sessions on depression and anxiety to community groups. These discussions are a good opportunity to ask questions and learn more about depression from someone around your own age.

Besides discussing how to recognise the signs and symptoms, the sessions also look at:

- **what treatments are available**
- **how to support someone with depression or an anxiety disorder**
- **ways of seeking help and finding community support**
- **ways to stay mentally healthy.**

Peer educators from COTA host interactive *beyond maturityblues* sessions. These educators are people over 50 who have been trained to talk with groups about depression, anxiety and how these conditions can affect people's lives.

COTA also provides sessions for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities and has bilingual Italian, Greek, Vietnamese and Chinese peer educators who can deliver sessions to people who don't speak English.

Already, almost 60,000 people have attended the *beyond maturityblues* peer education sessions across Australia. To enquire about upcoming sessions near you, call COTA in your state or territory or visit the COTA website at www.cotaaustralia.org.au

beyondblue is a proud beneficiary of The Movember Foundation and funds received have contributed to the delivery of the beyond maturityblues program.

Where can I find out more?

For more information on depression, anxiety and related mental health disorders, call the *beyondblue* information line on **1300 22 4636** or visit the website www.beyondblue.org.au

beyondblue has a wide range of **FREE** resources relevant to older people. These include:

- Chronic physical illness and depression
- Depression in older people
- Depression and coronary heart disease
- Depression and diabetes
- Depression after stroke
- Keeping active
- Depression and dementia
- Depression and arthritis
- Depression and Parkinson's disease
- Depression and breast cancer
- Prostate cancer and depression/anxiety
- Depression in people who are deaf or hard of hearing

- Help for depression under Medicare

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