Almost every one of us feels fed up at some time in our lives, but these feelings are usually short lived and manageable. However, these feelings can become severe and begin to impact on a person’s ability to function, making life feel like a struggle. Depression can affect a person’s ability to work, study, socialise and develop relationships. Depression affects many people - it is estimated that one in six people will be depressed at some time in their lives - yet it can feel like a lonely and isolated experience.

What is Depression?
Sometimes depression is a reaction to a life event, such as the end of a relationship, bereavement or job loss. It is normal to experience a period of sadness after such events but sometimes this sadness is prolonged, and may even affect someone more than the actual event that initially sparked the depression. Depression is not always caused by an event and can appear to come from nowhere. Someone may appear to others to have everything going for them and yet still experience a bout of depression.

Depression is usually thought to be characterised by feelings of sadness.

However for some people it can involve a complete numbness of all feelings.

The following are just some of the most common symptoms of depression:

- Feelings of unhappiness that do not go away after a few weeks
- Change in sleeping and/or eating habits
- Poor concentration, making it harder to study
- Frustration and anger at self and others
- Avoiding other people and certain situations
- Feeling completely alone and isolated
- Possible misuse of alcohol, drugs and tobacco
- Feelings of worthlessness and that ‘it’s all your fault’
- Suicidal thoughts

Continued overleaf
Someone with depression may have one or more of these symptoms. The duration and severity of depression varies, for some it may last weeks or months and for others it will last a year or more. For many people, feelings of depression will subside, however some will need to seek support. It can be difficult to seek assistance since some people blame themselves for the way they are feeling and try to cope alone. However research shows that people who seek help are likely to overcome depression quicker than those who try to cope alone.

Helping Yourself
There are some things that you can try and do yourself to lift your mood, however, it is not always possible to do this alone and you may need to approach someone for support:

• Spend time with people rather than avoiding company. Isolation can increase the feelings of depression.
• Look after yourself. Regular exercise has been shown by research to help lift depression.
• It can be tempting to try and find release by over using drugs, alcohol and tobacco. This may provide a temporary solution but in the long term can bring its own problems by causing depression.
• Remember that depression is not a sign of weakness. Many of us will experience it at sometime in our lives and with time, and the necessary support, it will decrease.
• If you have someone you feel comfortable talking to, tell them about it. They will probably want to be given the opportunity to help and listen.

Helping Others
You may not have depression yourself, but may be concerned about someone you care about or live with. If you have read this leaflet and think that some of the symptoms apply to someone you know, then it may be that they are depressed. Below are some of the things that you could think about doing to help.

• Try not to be judgmental, or to assume you know how they are feeling. They are more likely to open up if they feel that they are being listened to without judgment.
• Try and encourage them to do the things that they did prior to having depression.
• Persist - a depressed person may take out their feelings on those closest to them. It can be hard to care for someone if they do not appear to value your friendship. However, your friend may feel that they are not worthy of your friendship and try to push you away. Try not to be put off by this.
• If you can try to signpost your friend to appropriate support.

GETTING SUPPORT
In the University:
You can talk confidentially to the Student Support Coordinator.
Email: student.support@ncl.ac.uk
Webform: studentsupport.newcastle.edu.my
Or make an appointment at the Learning Resource Centre

Outside the University
Your GP or family doctor can be a useful first point of contact. In some cases, your doctor will refer you for more specialised help and support. Sometimes it is easier to talk to someone over the phone.

Counselling and Support Centres
The Befrienders Johor Bahru.
Tel: 07- 331 2300
Hospital Permai Hotline:
07-2343030

v.1 0913