

Consulting counsellors & doctors

Depression can be a serious condition and it is always advisable to seek professional support if you think depression may be affecting you.

This worksheet will help you consider what doctors and counsellors can offer, and help you prepare yourself so that you can get the most out of your appointments with these professionals.

1. Seeing a doctor

A GP doctor is the starting point within the healthcare system. Your doctor is the right person to diagnose depression and to advise you on the best treatments for you. A doctor will discuss pros and cons of medication with you, but the decision about taking them is up to you – don't avoid seeing the doctor just because you don't want to take medication.

Read the 'Consulting a doctor', 'Pros and cons of medication', 'Medication vocabulary' and 'Other mental health services' pages. To help you think through the decision to see a doctor, think about what your concerns are and what you would hope to gain.

My concerns about going to see a doctor are:

What I would hope to gain from seeing a doctor:

It can help to prepare what you want to say:

Example:

I will identify the GP I want to see by ringing the surgery and asking if any of the GPs specialises in depression and when they are available



"One thing I realised is that GPs are human beings much like ourselves. They see countless people through their doors a day. Not all of them have taken me seriously, take someone with you to stress how you're feeling."
– Tonya



I have prepared what I want to say, as follows: ___ "I have been feeling low lately and I wanted to check this out with you as I think I may be depressed. If this is the case, I am not sure I want to be given medication, but would like to find out more about this and other options to help me feel better" ___

If you have been having suicidal thoughts it is vital that you tell the doctor, eg. "I also want to tell you that I am worried about my own safety because I have sometimes had thoughts about suicide"

I have completed the 'Am I depressed?' worksheet to take with me to the appointment so I can explain my symptoms clearly
YES / NO

I want to ask the following questions: ___ I want to know for sure whether what is going on can be labelled 'depression' and how bad it is ___

___ I want to know more about the side effects of antidepressants, and whether I'd still be able to drink alcohol and if it will make any difference to the Pill ___

___ I want to know what other options I have besides taking tablets ___

If the appointment doesn't feel helpful, I will get a second opinion by: ___ Trying again with another GP, or maybe go to the counselling service first then try again after that if they think it would be a good idea ___

My GP appointment preparation intention:

I will identify the GP I want to see by: _____

_____ (doing what, when)

This is what I want to say to start the appointment: _____

I have completed the 'Am I depressed?' worksheet to take with me to the appointment so I can explain my symptoms clearly
YES / NO


I want to ask the following questions: _____



If the appointment doesn't feel helpful, I will get a second opinion by:

2. Seeing a counsellor

Counselling is about talking to someone who understands what depression is and what can help. Counsellors are professionally trained to work with people on their personal and emotional issues, including depression and suicide. They offer a chance to talk freely to someone who doesn't know you and won't judge. They don't generally tell you what to do, but help you understand things better and find a way forward.



Counselling was a turning point for me. Not to say that it 'fixed' the issues but rather gave me an alternate perspective on myself and how to treat how I was feeling." – Mark

1. My counselling service contact details

Find the contact details of the counselling service on your campus at www.student.counselling.co.uk or use your campus student support web pages. Record the details here if you wish.

_____ (phone)

_____ (email)

_____ (address)

2. How and when I will ask for an appointment

You can usually phone, email or go in person to make an appointment. Sometimes you may be able to use a 'drop in' service to make initial contact. Have your current timetable with you, so you can provide your availability for an appointment.

I will phone/email/go in person/use drop-in (what) on _____ (when)

3. My preparation for the counselling appointment

You may be asked to fill in a 'pre-counselling' form or other type of questionnaire, ahead of the first counselling session. This helps you to prepare for the session so that you can get the most benefit from it. If you are not asked to complete a form, then you can use the following questions to help you prepare for your first counselling session. First read 'What is counselling?' and 'How can counselling help?' It may also be useful to complete the 'Am I depressed?' worksheet first. You can take it with you to the session so you know you'll remember what you wanted to say.



A summary of the problem that I am bringing to counselling:

Use your answers on the 'Am I depressed?' worksheet to help you identify the most important aspects of how you are feeling and how your life is being affected

Relevant background info about my family and childhood:

How my problem is affecting my uni work (if at all):



What I want to get from the counselling/what aspect I want to focus on:

The outcome I would like from counselling – the differences I would want to feel and see in my life:

Use the 'Am I depressed?' worksheet (see the 'What is depression?' section) to help you prepare for a doctor's or counsellor's appointment.

