

## Stone Center Counseling Service Wellesley College

### Are these just “the blues” or...am I depressed?

Everyone feels “blue” at certain times during his or her life. In fact, transitory feelings of sadness or discouragement are perfectly normal, especially during particularly stressful times. But when a person’s feelings get worse, persist, or impede a person’s ability to function, then s/he may be suffering from depression.

#### What are the typical signs and symptoms of depression?

- Persistent sad, irritable, anxious or empty mood
- Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism, guilt, or worthlessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in ordinary activities
- Sleep disturbances (Insomnia or oversleeping)
- Eating disturbances (Increased or decreased appetite/weight)
- Decreased energy, fatigue, and feeling “slowed down”
- Thoughts of death or suicide; suicide attempts
- Increased restlessness and irritability
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering and making decisions
- Physical symptoms – such as headaches, digestive problems or chronic pain – that doesn’t respond to medical treatment
- Feeling completely alone or isolating yourself from others

How do you know if you need professional help? In general, you should get professional help if your attempts at self-help are ineffective, and/or if your depression persists for several weeks, becomes more severe or leads to self-destructive thoughts or behavior. Even if your difficulties seem less serious, counseling might help!

How do you help a friend? You aren’t responsible for your friend’s depression or mood, but there are some things you can do that can help. These include being available to listen, being supportive and showing that you care. It is also important to be honest with friends. If her or his behavior or comments worry you, say so. It’s important to be someone a friend can confide in, but don’t let yourself be sworn to secrecy about information that indicates she or he is at risk.

Taking care while giving care: Don’t let yourself get in over your head. If you start to feel too burdened, overwhelmed or concerned about your friend, it’s time to ask a professional for help. You can always get a consultation about what to do without first sharing your friend’s name, to help you figure out how to get her help.

Depression is treatable! Many people don’t get help because they don’t realize they’re depressed, or they blame the depression on personal weakness and feel ashamed about needing help. Frequently, the depression itself makes a person feel hopeless and immobilized. **Getting help is a sign of strength, not weakness.**

The Stone Center Counseling Service is free and available to all Wellesley students. It is open Monday – Friday, 8:30 – 4:30 during the academic year. To make an appointment, call x2839 or come by the Stone Center.

Contact information: Stone Center Counseling Service x2839 (M - F 8:30 – 4:30)  
Emergencies x2839 (evening and weekends) or Campus Police x5555 (24 hours)