

# Depression



South Mississippi State Hospital and the Mississippi Department of Mental Health are working together to change the way you think about mental health. One of the most difficult challenges the field of mental health faces in Mississippi is stigma. Our goal is to eliminate misconceptions and promote a better understanding of mental health and illnesses. The following information is a way to help you "Think Again" about depression and understand the related issues.

## **What is Depression?**

Depression is an illness that involves the body, mood, and thoughts. It may affect the way you eat and/or sleep, the way you feel about yourself, and the way you think about things. Depression is not the same as a passing blue mood. It is not a sign of personal weakness or a condition that can be willed or wished away. People with a depressive illness cannot merely "pull themselves together" and get better. Without treatment, symptoms can last for weeks, months, or years. Appropriate treatment, however, can help most people who suffer from depression.

Depression is a serious medical illness; it's not something that you have made up in your head. It's more than just feeling "down in the dumps" or "blue" for a few days. It's feeling "down" and "low" and "hopeless" for weeks at a time.

## **What are the signs & symptoms?**

- Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" mood
- Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities that were once enjoyed

## **What causes depression?**

There is no single known cause of depression. Rather, it likely results from a combination of genetic, biochemical, environmental, and psychological factors. Research indicates that depression is a disorder of the brain. Some types of depression tend to run in families, suggesting a genetic link. However, depression can occur in people without family histories of depression as well.

## **What type of treatment is available?**

A variety of treatments including medications and short-term psychotherapies have proven effective for depression. For more information, please contact South Mississippi State Hospital at (601) 794-0100 or the Mississippi Department of Mental Health at (601) 359-1288.

