Depression & Mental Health

Understand the impact. Notice the pattern. Know what to do.



WHAT IS IT?

Depression is more than feeling sad or having a bad day. It can involve persistent low mood, loss of interest or pleasure, low energy and changes in sleep, appetite or thinking.

It can affect daily life, relationships and sport. A coach should never diagnose.

5 WAYS DEPRESSION CAN AFFECT SOMEONE

01 Mood & hope

Depression can feel like sadness, emptiness, numbness, irritability, guilt, worthlessness or hopelessness.

02 Thinking & focus

Concentration, memory and decisions may become harder. Negative thoughts and harsh self-criticism can feel convincing.

03 Energy & body

Low energy, slowed movement, restlessness, aches or appetite changes can make daily tasks harder.

04 Sleep & routine

Sleeping too much or too little can disrupt routines, self-care, attendance, motivation and recovery.

05 Connection & safety

Someone may withdraw, stop enjoying sport or use substances to cope. Thoughts of self-harm or suicide need urgent support.

A coach notices and supports—a coach does not diagnose.

TEAMMATE 85258 | ChildLine 0800 1111 | Lifeline 0808 808 8000 | "It's alright to ask for help" SAMARITANS 116 123

Notice. Respond. Connect.
SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR IN SPORT

What a volunteer coach may notice—and what to do next.

- Persistent low mood, numbness, tearfulness or irritability.
- Loss of interest, enjoyment or motivation—including in sport.
- Missing sessions, withdrawing from teammates or becoming hard to contact.
- Low energy, slowed movement, poor sleep, appetite or self-care changes.
- Poor concentration, indecision, harsh self-talk or feeling worthless.
- Talking about hopelessness, self-harm, suicide or not wanting to be here.



Look for change, patterns and context. These signs can have many explanations.

01 NOTICE

Spot Changes in behaviour, mood , attendance or performance.

No obvious sign?
Check in anyway.

02 TALK

Say what you have noticed, or simply remind them you care. "Ive noticed.." "I'm checking in.."

Follow safeguarding procedures.

03 LISTEN

Give them time. Ask open questions. Do not interrupt, judge or rush to try and fix everything.

Take notice and care to listen.

04 CARE

Stay calm, kind and non-judgmental. Repeat back what they tell you. Respect privacy within the safeguarding limits e.g. Coach, Parent and Safeguarding Officer.

Ask what would help.

05 CONNECT

If anything worries you follow the safeguarding procedures and connect them with the right lead, trusted person, GP or support service.

Immediate danger call 999.

URGENT / MEDICAL

Take any mention of suicide or self-harm seriously. Ask directly if they are thinking about suicide. If there is immediate danger, they have seriously harmed themselves or cannot stay safe, call 999 or go to A&E. Stay with them and follow instructions. Follow safeguarding procedures.

WHERE TO GET HELP IN NORTHERN IRELAND

GP / LOCAL SERVICE

TEXT "TEAMMATE" TO 85258
LIFELINE 0808 808 8000
CHILDLINE 0800 1111





5 WAYS TO SUPPORT SOMEONE

01 Notice, ask and listen

Choose a suitable moment and use what you have observed: “I’ve noticed you haven’t seemed yourself lately. How are you feeling?”

Listen without judgement or immediately offering solutions. Avoid saying “cheer up” or “others have it worse.”

02 Support small, achievable activities

Help them choose one manageable action: attend part of training, take a short walk, eat something, shower or restore a sleep routine. Activity and routine can improve mood, but start gently and avoid making exercise sound like a cure.

Behavioural activation and appropriate exercise are evidence-based interventions for depression.

03 Help them access professional support

Encourage contact with a GP or appropriate mental-health service when symptoms persist, worsen or affect everyday life.

Offer practical help—finding contact details, making the call together or accompanying them to an appointment. Continue checking in afterwards.

04 Maintain connection and belonging

Depression often causes withdrawal and isolation. Continue inviting the person to training, social activities and conversations, even if they sometimes decline.

A short message or quiet check-in can help them feel remembered without creating pressure.

05 Ask directly about safety

If they appear hopeless or say life is not worth living, ask calmly: “Are you thinking about harming yourself or suicide?” Evidence recommends asking directly. Take any answer seriously, do not promise secrecy and arrange support appropriate to the risk.

Avoid: forcing conversation, criticising missed activities, offering simplistic solutions or assuming improvement means all risk has passed.



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