

## Assisting the Depressed Student

Depression is a growing concern among adolescents and emerging adults. In a 2003 study, emerging adults aged 15-24 had the highest rates of depression (at 6.4 %) in comparison to all other age groups (<http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/82-617-XIE/htm/5110015.htm>). Incidence of depression among women are double that found among men (<http://www.statcan.ca/english/studies/82-003/archive/1999/hrar1999011003s0a05.pdf>).

### Scenario:

At the start of the semester Marie was always present in class, she participated in discussions, and she was doing well on her quizzes and assignments. However, over the last three weeks you've noticed a change in the way she dresses, the way she is behaving, and her general mood. She has started arriving late to class, she sleeps through most lectures, she is not smiling, and she has not been as well-kept as before (i.e. less hygienic, rumpled and dirty clothes).

### What to look for:

- Guilt, low self-esteem, feelings of inaptitude and inadequacy, feelings of sadness, helplessness, and hopelessness.
- Loss of appetite, insomnia or hypersomnia, lack of interest in daily activities, low energy levels, inability to concentrate, thoughts of suicide.
- Traumatic/stressful events (i.e. loss of parent, friend, romantic relationship; changes in family relationships/peer relationships), lack of social relationships.
- Drug/alcohol abuse

### What to do:

- Let the student know that you have noticed some changes in his/her behaviour, appearance, and demeanour and you would like to help.
- Encourage the student to express how he/she is feeling. Often students are initially reluctant to talk but others' attention will give students a feeling of being more worthwhile.
- Invite the student to seek out a counsellor in Student Services (355).

### What to avoid:

- Try to avoid using expressions such as "not to worry", "crying won't solve anything", or "everything will be better tomorrow".
- Try not to lecture the student.
- Try not to console by citing much worse cases.
- Don't be afraid to ask whether or not the student is suicidal.