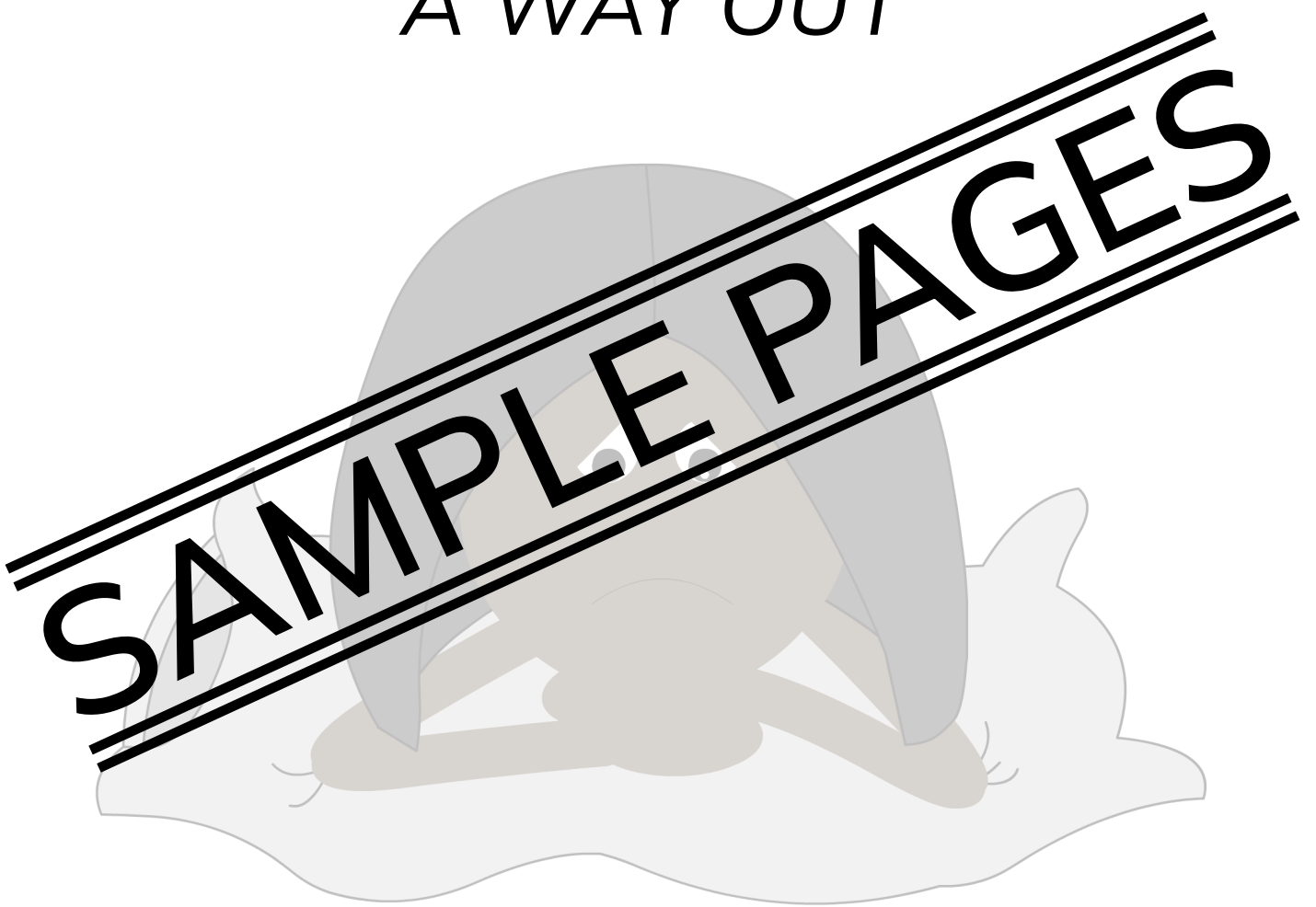


TEENAGE DEPRESSION

A WAY OUT



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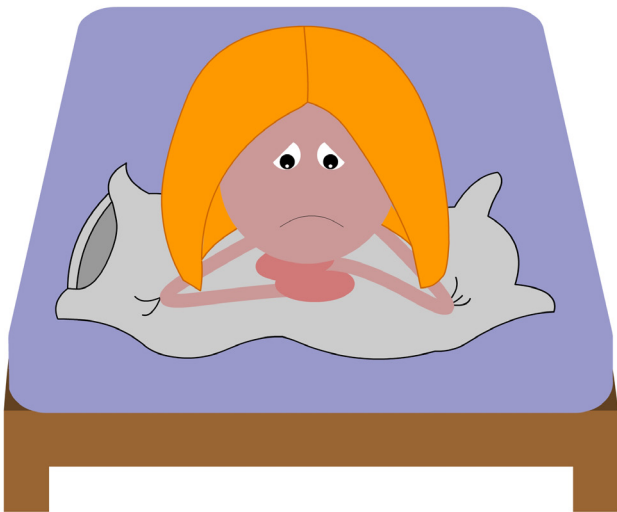
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How Does Depression Feel?

When interviewed, this is how some young people suffering from depression described their feelings:

1. I felt 'dead' inside.
2. It was as if I was living in a 'twilight world'.
3. I was at the bottom of a deep, dark pit with no way out.
4. I felt totally alienated from others. I couldn't imagine ever feeling normal again.



These young people also described the frustration they felt due to their inability to make others understand how they felt.

Their family and friends were unable to understand the pain they were in and therefore nobody else knew of the total hopelessness and despair that overwhelmed them.

Because they were unable to describe to others their feelings of utter loneliness and dejection, they felt unreal and detached from the world. It was as if they cried out, but nobody heard.

Write the above four sentences on a flipchart or whiteboard.

Give out **WORKSHEET 2** and ask the group to get into smaller groups of three or four depending on numbers.

Tell them to work through each of the questions in turn.

After approximately 10 minutes, call everyone together and go through the results in a group.

Loneliness

It is normal to feel lonely from time to time and it is something that most people have experienced. Depressed people, however, experience this to a much greater degree and can feel completely and utterly alone.

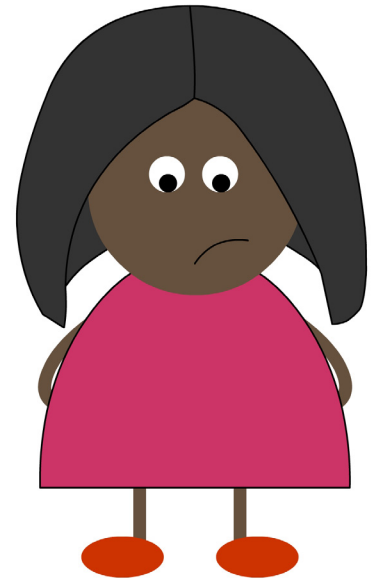
This is not to be confused with being physically alone. You can be in a crowded room and still feel lonely. Conversely you can be on your own but not feel lonely at all. The loneliness we are focusing on is the overwhelming feeling of being cut off from the world.

Discuss the following feelings with the group and ask if anyone has ever felt like this and why:

- You may feel that nobody likes you, that you are boring and useless.
- You may crave company but cannot bear the pain and anguish of having to converse with another person.
- Nobody can understand the desperation and panic you feel.

Much of this is related to negative thinking. Ask the group to look back at the previous sections and worksheets to see whether our own thinking is responsible for our loneliness. Low self-esteem can form a barrier that prevents people from opening up to others. Flipchart the following questions and ask the group whether they ever find themselves thinking or saying the following:

- I'm too boring and worthless to have friends
- They couldn't possibly want to be friends with me
- I can't think of anything interesting to say
- That type of person wouldn't like me



WORKSHEET 11

Think about the scenarios in **WORKSHEET 10**. How would you answer the following?

1. What qualities are required to enable you to stand up for yourself in these situations?
2. Have you ever been forced to do something that you knew to be wrong or harmful? What was it? Did you consider not doing it?
3. What would have happened if you had refused to do it?
4. Did you regret doing it afterwards?
5. Are you willing to stand out as different?
6. Do you always follow the crowd?
7. Have you ever felt bad about doing something you were forced to do? How bad did it make you feel?

Maybe you have taken part in things due to peer pressure which you regret or perhaps you are doing so now. You may feel things are getting out of hand and you don't know what to do about it. This can lead to feelings of self-hatred and fear. You know you should make a stand for your beliefs and you want to stand up for yourself but it is very difficult. What can you do to help yourself?

Remember, you do not need to seek the approval of others. It may be easier to go along with the crowd, but how will you feel if you are being pushed to do something you don't want to do?

WORKSHEET 16

Look at the table below and answer the questions.

After 10 minutes, swap with a partner. Are their views the same as yours?

Why do we take exams?	
What do you expect to achieve with exams?	
What do your parents expect of you?	
What do you intend to do in the future?	

When you have reviewed the table, think about the following:

- Do you agree that we should strive for success at any price?
- Is the exam system fair?
- Can you think of a fairer system to replace or work alongside the present exam system?
- Does an exam grade mean you really know the subject?