

## DEPRESSIVE DISORDERS

### PERSISTENT DEPRESSIVE DISORDER (DYSTHYMIA)



SA Federation for  
Mental Health

#### What it is:

Persistent depressive disorder, or dysthymia, is a chronic form of major depressive disorder. In dysthymia the symptoms of major depressive disorder may be less severe, but they are longer lasting, and so they cause a great deal of impairment to an individual's daily ability to function. Dysthymia is classified as having a depressed mood, for example constantly feeling sad, empty or hopeless, for at least 2 years. In children or adolescents this can exhibit as an irritable mood rather than sad, and must be constant for at least 1 year. Individuals with Dysthymia will not present with manic or hypomanic symptoms. In dysthymia, the symptoms of depression may go unnoticed for some time, as they are less acute but longer lasting than in other forms of depression.

#### Common symptoms:

1. Constantly feeling sad, hopeless or empty, for an extended period of time
2. Constantly feeling irritated or agitated, for an extended period of time
3. Poor appetite or over eating
4. Sleeping too much or too little
5. Low energy levels or fatigue
6. Low self-esteem
7. Poor levels of concentration

#### Causes:

Researchers believe that there are a number of factors that play a role in the development of dysthymia, including temperament, environmental, genetic and physiological. Individuals with higher levels of negative affectivity, as well as those with anxiety or conduct disorders have an increased chance of developing the disorder. Childhood risk factors include parental loss or separation. A number of brain regions have also been shown to play a role in the development of dysthymia.