

# Tinnitus SA

## Mood and tinnitus

Our moods are complicated. One day we can feel on top of the world, the next day down in the dumps. When we feel positive we can accept some of the things life throws at us without feeling overwhelmed by difficult emotions, but when we feel down, things can seem bleak and impossible.

When a person develops tinnitus it arrives as a change in their life. It may also represent a loss – a loss of silence or a loss of control over an aspect of life. Both unexpected change and loss can cause a person to experience an adjustment reaction. Part of this reaction can include distressing moods or emotional states such as disbelief, anger, anxiety and depression. For most people, these moods pass after a period of weeks or a few months as they adjust to the tinnitus perception.

For some people, the distress lasts longer and becomes more clearly depression or anxiety. Which emotion is stronger will depend on the types of beliefs the person holds about the tinnitus. If they believe that something has been lost, then depression is likely to be dominant. If they hold beliefs about the possibility of future threat or loss, then anxiety could be stronger.

Anxiety and depression can also precede tinnitus onset. A study of tinnitus patients found that more than one-half had experienced mood disorders or anxiety prior to the onset of the tinnitus. Symptoms of depression or anxiety can complicate reactions to tinnitus.

How can a person recognise if they are experiencing emotions which need some help? Depression and

anxiety disorders are not the same, but they can seem similar and may be present together. Depression generates emotions such as hopelessness, despair and anger. Energy levels are usually very low, and depressed people often feel overwhelmed by the day-to-day tasks and personal relationships so essential to life.

A person with anxiety disorder experiences fear, panic or anxiety in situations where most people would not feel anxious or threatened. The sufferer may experience sudden panic or anxiety attacks without any recognized trigger and often lives with a constant nagging worry or anxiousness. Without treatment, such disorders can restrict a person's ability to work, maintain relationships, or even leave the house.

### About Depression

Around one person in seven will experience at least a short period of depression at some stage in their life. For most people, symptoms of depression include at least some of the following:

- Depressed mood, feeling down
- Not being interested in the things you usually enjoy
- Having guilty feelings
- Disturbed sleep – sleeping too much or not enough
- Being tired all the time
- Not being able to concentrate
- Not being able to enjoy things
- Thinking a lot about death or suicide

### About Anxiety

The symptoms of anxiety are:

- Feeling 'keyed up' or on edge

### About Tinnitus SA

Tinnitus SA is a web based tinnitus information service designed to provide awareness, factsheets and information about management options for people with tinnitus and health professionals alike. Tinnitus SA services are provided by non-profit South Australian Audiology business Can:Do Hearing on behalf of the South Australian Government.

[tinnitussa.com.au](http://tinnitussa.com.au)



**Tinnitus SA**  
Lightens the load

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- Worrying a lot, e.g. about performance, loss of control, your health
- Feeling irritable
- Difficulty relaxing
- Difficulty falling asleep or sleeping poorly
- Headaches or neck aches
- Experiencing some of the following: trembling, tingling, dizzy spells, sweating, diarrhoea, or needing to pass water more often than usual

### Suicidal Thoughts

Tinnitus is NOT associated with higher rates of suicide. One study of people who attempted suicide found that only 1.6% had tinnitus – which is less than in the general population. None of the people with tinnitus in the study stated that tinnitus played a role in their attempted suicide. Another study of 28 people with tinnitus who had committed suicide did not identify any particular pattern of tinnitus or associated auditory symptom. People with tinnitus who commit suicide have the same sort of psychological profiles as the wider population of suicide victims, that is, tinnitus does not make a person more prone to self-harm. If you are having thoughts of self-harm, speak to a family member, friend or your doctor and get help.

### Treatment for anxiety or depression

Treatment helps people recover faster from depression or anxiety. The two main treatments are 'talking therapy' and antidepressant medicines. These options should be discussed with a Doctor. Medications can help relieve depressed feelings and treat anxiety.

Exercise and relaxation techniques. Because anxiety clearly has a physical component (especially when it manifests as a panic attack), techniques for relaxing the body are an important part of the treatment plan for someone who is anxious. These include abdominal breathing, progressive muscle relaxation (relaxing the body's muscle groups) and biofeedback. Regular exercise also has a direct impact on several physiological conditions that underlie both anxiety and depression.



**Can:Do Hearing**

Cognitive-behavioural therapy. Talking therapies aim to treat depression and anxiety by helping change the way one thinks about and reacts to situations and relationships. Cognitive-behavioural therapy helps to alter anxious self-talk and mistaken beliefs that give the body messages which provoke bad feelings. What often underlies negative self-talk is a set of negative beliefs about ourselves and the world. Replacing these beliefs with empowering truths can help to heal the roots of anxiety and depression. See our Fact Sheet for more information about CBT.

Monitoring diet and nutrition. Stimulants such as caffeine and nicotine can aggravate anxiety and leave one more prone to anxiety and panic attacks. Other dietary factors such as sugar, certain food additives and food sensitivities can make some people feel anxious. Seeing a nutritionally-oriented physician or therapist may help you to identify and eliminate possible offending substances from your diet.

### More information

If you need to talk to someone about your difficult feelings (or are caring for someone with depression or anxiety), call Lifeline 131 114 (24 hours, 7 days a week).

Some useful websites:

[www.depressionnet.com.au](http://www.depressionnet.com.au)

[www.bluepages.anu.edu.au](http://www.bluepages.anu.edu.au)

[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

[www.sane.org](http://www.sane.org)

[www.moodgym.anu.edu.au](http://www.moodgym.anu.edu.au)

[www.happier.com](http://www.happier.com)

[www.thehappinessinstitute.com](http://www.thehappinessinstitute.com)

How to get help:

- seek help directly from a psychologist or counsellor
- seek a referral from your Doctor to a psychiatrist
- seek a referral from your Doctor to a psychologist – your GP can determine if you are eligible for a Mental Health Care Plan which receives a Medicare subsidy
- Online at [www.tinnituseprogramme.org](http://www.tinnituseprogramme.org)

### Contact Us

We would love to hear from you. For further information about our services and to discuss your needs please contact us on;

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