



Statement on Depressions

1. Definition

Depression is a psychological illness with both physical and psychological symptoms. If these symptoms last for **more than two weeks**, the condition is described as depression.

Social life is **severely affected**. The symptoms are as follows:

- Depressive mood (joylessness, sadness, feeling of inferiority)
- Thought block (limited concentration, taciturn, monosyllabic)
- Psychomotor disorders (slowing down of movements, indecision, exhaustion)
- Altered physical sensations (lump in the throat; feeling of heaviness in the head; feeling of apprehension; sleep, appetite and digestive disorders)
- Delusional thoughts (of sinfulness, impoverishment, disease)

2. Causes of depression

The causes of depression are mainly psychological and social, but can also be physical illnesses.

3. Suicide risk

People concerned may see their situation as hopeless, and be unable to find any meaning in their lives any more. Suicide threats must be taken seriously. Those concerned must not be left alone, and must be placed immediately in the care of the family doctor/emergency doctor.

4. Treatments

Despite the serious symptoms, many sources of help and treatment options are available today for improving the quality of life of sufferers and resolving the condition. The possible treatments include drug therapy and psychotherapy.

5. Advice for ministers and reference persons

Ministers and reference persons should

- take seriously the behaviour of those concerned, and accept their condition. Their lives of faith (e.g. praying, attendance at church services) may be limited.
- not explain the causes of depression as a lack of faith.
- advise depressed people to seek professionally recognised treatment.

Psychological illnesses are not an obstacle to achieving the goal of faith.



6. Responsibility and liability

Ministers of the New Apostolic Church deal with spiritual welfare, and therefore play a mainly pastoral role. They must not take personal decisions away from brethren, unless the patient's life is at risk.

Ministers must be aware of their responsibility and their risk of liability for legal problems that the provision of unqualified advice and inappropriate behaviour might cause them and the church. Moreover, the reputation of and confidence in the ministers and church might be adversely affected, and the sufferer's problems made worse.

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