

**What this fact sheet covers:**

- What to expect from a consultation with a mental health practitioner
- Key points to remember
- Where to get more information

What to expect from a mental health consultation

When you consult a mental health professional, you should expect confidentiality, empathy, understanding and being given sufficient time to express your thoughts and feelings. You should expect a thorough assessment of your mental health problem/s. The assessment could cover the following things:

- is depression or bipolar disorder the main problem, or secondary to another problem (such as anxiety or substance abuse)
- what are the features of the illness?
- what is the risk of self-harm, or harm to others?
- how disabling is the illness?
- whether there were any triggers to the illness, and if there were, what their meaning was to you
- the nature of family or friendship supports
- your childhood experiences, including school and peer interaction, and the nature of parenting you received
- whether there is any family history of depression or bipolar disorder
- your general level of satisfaction with work
- the quality of your relationships - both intimate and others
- your personality style and general coping responses
- your drug and alcohol history
- whether there are any relevant medical problems
- whether you have any allergies, including information about any medications you are taking
- whether there are any cognitive limitations affecting your concentration, memory or intellectual functioning
- whether you have previously had any depressive or manic episodes and if so, how they were treated
- whether there might be any factors sustaining the depression or triggering the mania, such as marital problems, work problems or other stresses
- your own views about the reasons for having developed the illness (particularly in the case of depression) and any preferences you might have about its treatment.



After assessing you, and if the diagnosis is clear, the mental health professional should inform you of the following:

- whether you have depression or bipolar disorder, and if so, what type it is
- where relevant, you should also be told why the illness developed at this point in time
- a management strategy should be recommended, and, if more than one mental health professional is involved in providing you with treatment, there should be clear lines of responsibility for those other professionals.

Key points to remember

When you consult a mental health practitioner you should expect:

- thoroughness in assessing your mental illness
- understanding, empathy and patience
- sufficient time throughout the consultation for you to express your thoughts and feelings
- opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns
- professional support if you request a referral for a second opinion.

Where to get more information

- Watch our Depression Education Program www.blackdoginstitute.org.au
- www.depressionservices.org.au
- NSW Consumer Advisory Group (Mental Health) www.mentalhealth.asn.au

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