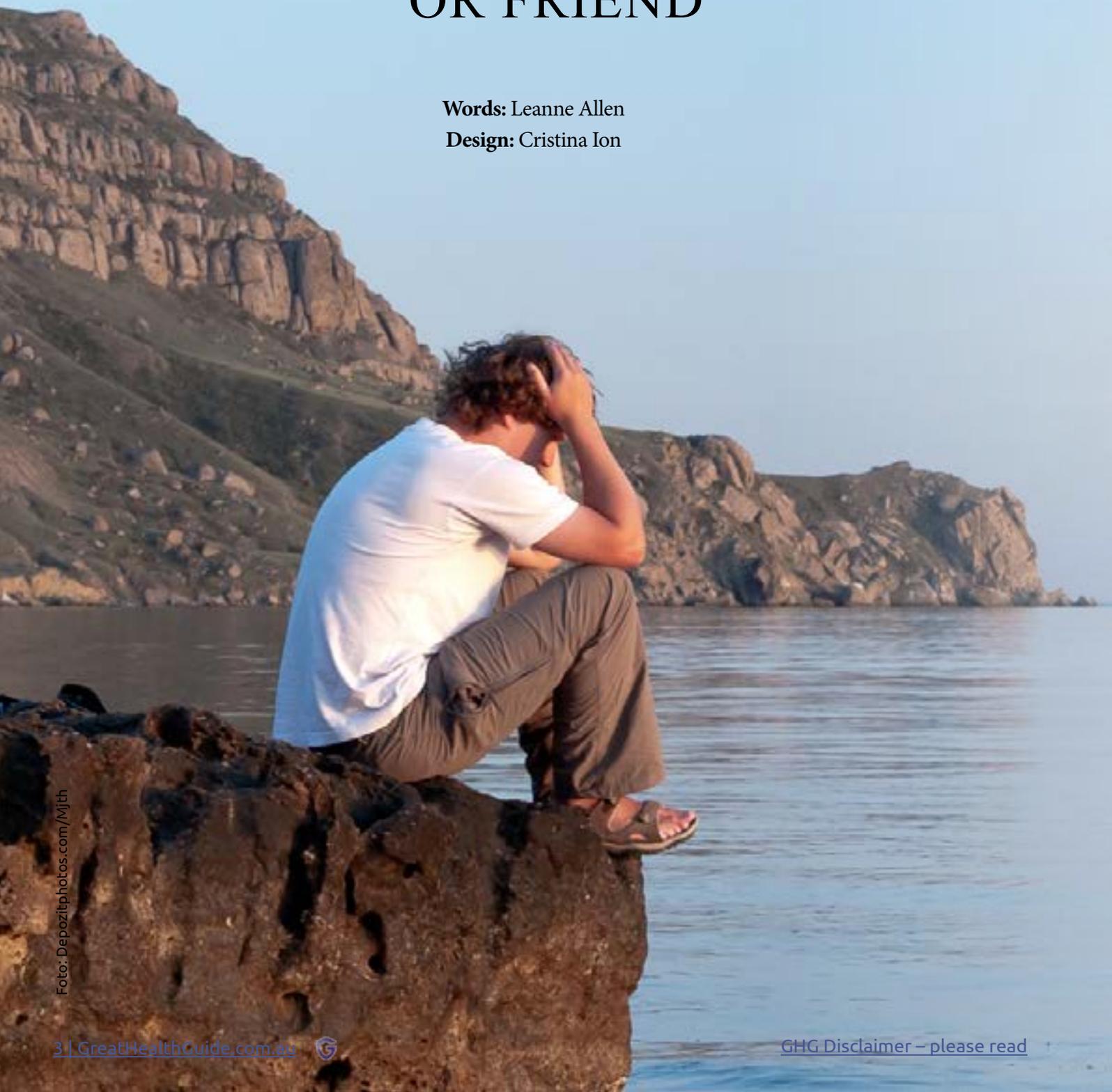


IS HE DEPRESSED?

YOUR PARTNER,
DAD, BROTHER, SON
OR FRIEND

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Often men do not recognise that they are depressed ... and women don't always see it either. About 65% of male depression goes undetected, unreported and untreated. That's a significant number of hurting men. So let's be aware of the signs and find tools so we can be a part of the solution ... to help the men in our lives through difficult times.

To make it a little easier to recognise here are some things that you might look out for:

- increased anger or irritability
- noticeable change in mood (e.g. used to be happy but now seems really quiet)
- withdrawn, not talking as much to you or friends
- change in appetite or sleep patterns
- loss of interest in sex, friendships, sporting activities or work
- drinking more or gambling
- cries at things that didn't bother him before like movies or when talking to you
- doesn't want to play with or hang out with the kids anymore
- increased use of pornography, on-line gaming or other online activities
- smoking more or using more 'party' drugs

This is by no means an extensive list, but it is something to consider. Any changes in a person's behaviour or mood could indicate that something is not right and it is worth a talking about. Changes don't always mean depression;

there are other causes of negative changes, in any case, they should not be ignored.

“THE MOST NOTICEABLE CHANGE IN MEN WHO ARE DEPRESSED IS AN INCREASE IN AGGRESSION, BULLYING AND BLAMING.”

This can be described as 'their way of weeping'. It's the way men can express themselves that is culturally more acceptable than a man actually crying or admitting something is wrong. For a man (and this can relate to women as well) depression equals vulnerability and shame and lack of functioning. It's the equivalent of being 'psychologically castrated'. This feeling of being weak is so debilitating that it leads to an increase in exaggerated and unacceptable behaviour.

WHAT COULD CAUSE THIS?

- dissatisfaction at work
- redundancy or loss of job/unable to find work
- financial stress
- relationship stress
- illness in his life or that of a significant person in his life
- accidents or other trauma (sometimes going back to childhood)
- grief caused by losing a significant person in his life (recent or past)
- a belief that he is not achieving his goals in life

- a feeling that he is not good enough
- identity issues 'What's the point of my life?'

Again, this is a small list of examples and by no means the only reasons. Any significant change in circumstance can lead to depression, even a significant birthday, which for some, can be fun and rewarding but for others, can be a bleak reminder of life's perceived failures. Everyone handles change differently.

WHAT CAN I DO?

The biggest fault that I see in women is their overwhelming desire for the man to talk to them. Women want men to tell them what is going on and why, thinking 'why won't you just talk to me!!!' It's not that simple. Often a depressed man has no idea what his problems are, he does not have a word for the way he is feeling and he does not know how to share it. If you have not had the kind of relationship that is open with feelings, then you cannot expect it to suddenly happen.

“DO NOT ASSUME THAT YOUR MAN IS PURPOSELY HOLDING BACK ON YOU!”

The best thing to do is first of all watch, observe and listen. Take some time to notice what is going on with your man. During an argument, never throw harsh words about a problem in his face. This will cause more problems includ-

ing resentment from him which will mean that he is less likely to seek help. During a quiet moment sit down and have a conversation. Discuss calmly what you have observed without accusing him of something. So you might say ‘I have noticed that you seem a bit withdrawn and more irritable lately, are you OK?’, rather than ‘What the hell is wrong with you?’

“THE BEST THING TO DO IS FIRST OF ALL WATCH, OBSERVE AND LISTEN.”

If you are concerned, it is very useful for you to talk to a professional about how you can help. Not everyone is inclined to seek help, particularly men. That is why male suicide is much more common than female suicide.

There are many organisations that can help:

- *Black Dog Institute*: (02) 9382 2991 <http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/index.cfm>
- *Mensline*: 1300789978 (24 hours)
- *Life Line*: 13 11 14 (24 hours)



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Alternatively you can use the internet to find a psychologist in your local area. If you are in a rural area, there are many psychologists who use Skype, so there is always someone who can help.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO READ MORE:

David Wexler is an expert of working with men in therapy. He is a clinical psychologist from San Diego, USA and travels the world teaching therapists how to work

with men. I have had the privilege of attending his two day workshop and can highly recommend his books:

David Wexler (2006): Is he depressed or what: What to do when the man you love is irritable, moody and withdrawn.

David Wexler (2004): When good men behave badly: Change your behaviour, change your relationship.

Leanne Allen (BA Psych) is the principle psychologist at Reconnect Psychology and Coaching Services. See her [Website](#). She has trained in Sandplay Therapy, NLP (Neuro-linguistic programming) and CBT Cognitive behavioural therapy) and just completed training as a life coach. Her approach is to look forward whilst releasing the trauma of the past. If you would like to talk to Leanne or arrange an appointment in person or via Skype, you can reach her on 1300 132 252. Please feel free to leave a comment on the [Facebook](#) page.