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## Program Support Notes

Junior - Senior Secondary

30mins

# Out of the Blue Strategies to Combat Teen Depression

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Health

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# **Out of the Blue - Strategies to Combat Teen Depression**

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## **For Teachers:**

### **Introduction**

Depression will affect around 1 in 5 Australians. The purpose of this program is to help everyone understand the symptoms and causes, how and where to find help and future trends in regards to treatment. Daniel Johns, singer of Silver Chair and the Dissociatives, discusses his experience with depression, along with young adults from both metro and regional areas. Jeff Kennett, Chairman of Beyondblue and other professionals from the field add informative and supportive commentary. Further resources and links are provided for information and study.

Thanks go to the Braemar College Woodend "Shine through the Blue" team of 2005 for development of this film brief: Simonne Collins, Alexandra Marks, Catherine Papaioannou, Rebecca Perry, Ryan Pool, Matthew Readman, Rynelle Rogers, Jackie Steeper, Sophie Vitesnik, Miranda Van Groningen, Jessica Woods.

### **Program Timeline**

00.30	Introduction
01.51	What is Teen Depression
07.15	Summary
07.41	Causes
14.22	Summary
14.43	Symptoms
19.04	Summary
19.28	Getting Help
24.11	Summary
24.36	Future Trends
28.05	Conclusion
28.58	Credits
29.48	Program end

### **Other Relevant Programs Available from VEA**

It's Never Too Late – Stopping Teen Suicide  
Youth Suicide and Depression  
Portion Control – Seeing the Healthy Way to Eat  
Attention Deficit Disorder – Mental Disorder Series  
Tackling Bullying Big Time Series

*Please visit our website for many more relevant programs [www.vea.com.au](http://www.vea.com.au)*

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# Out of the Blue - Strategies to Combat Teen Depression

## **Student Worksheet:**

### **While Viewing the Program**

1. If you had a friend either online or in direct conversation who let you know that they were feeling very down, list some of the people, resources and organisations suggested in this film that you could raise for your friend.

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2. Why is it that boys aren't often called "depressed" in the same kind of way that girls are? Do they talk as much about their inner feelings and if not, why not?

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3. Why do people need different levels of masks in everyday life? I.e. describe how and why you choose to be much more open with your best friend than with some family members. Explain the real value of having a mask in a certain situation, then show how the mask can become a hindrance if it's worn too often.

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4. What is the "mask" that they are supposed to wear as a "man", that girls are freer not to hide behind?

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5. Explain one time when you have felt a very low feeling "creep up on you", or a time when you've felt down in a very positive environment. List with a trusted classmate the things that you could have done to counter-act each part of the slide into feeling very low, or what help you could reach out for as a slide occurs.

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6. Summarise psychiatrist Dr. Eugen Koh's main points on depression from his first interview.

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7. List 2 answers from anyone in the class on why a former politician, Jeff Kennett, is leading an education campaign about depression.

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8. What are key points that Jeff Kennett makes about the symptoms of depression:

a) Sleep

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b) eating patterns

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c) weight

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d) social withdrawal and isolation

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9. Write a brief script on asking a depressed-looking or seeming friend if he/ she is "all right lately". Include in it some options and solutions for improving the situation with adult or professional help.

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10. Write a brief description of how a person feels inside, who "on the outside", with body language and voice tone, appears to be very down. Use the first-person "I am feeling..." Avoid slang terms; instead aim to be precise in your descriptions.

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11. What are some realistic reasons why rural Australian teen males have some of the highest suicide rates in the world? Consider each of the factors in turn:

- a) Living in a rural region - what might they have less of than city dwellers?
- b) What might the Australian masculine culture contribute to the result of suicide, say, contrasted with a French, or Italian or different culture?
- c) Why do teen males rather than teen females have a higher suicide completion rate, would you say?

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12. What are the statistics about depression given in the program? What do these figures tell you about why people, ideally, should not get "embarrassed" by mental illness issues?

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13. Explain the main points made about depression by Andrew Denton's interviewee - what does he say, and recommend? Do you agree - to what extent, and why?

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14. List the key comments made by child adolescent psychology specialist Monica about depression. Circle two that you think would be most helpful or relevant to anyone you know who may be dealing with depression, and discuss your choices with a classmate.

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15. Explain why a trip to a GP can be a very good first step if you or a friend suspect a case of depression. Research what youth services may exist in your area for confidential GP visits for school-age teens who may wish not to distress parents in earliest stages of treatment with the suspicion that the student is depressed. Your school planner or diary may already list some of these services in the Student Welfare section.

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16. Re Milk bar scene - If you notice a teen, or fellow student, looking very isolated, and feel any concern that he/she may need help to change, explain why approaching them or a trusted adult who knows that person is a better idea than simply leaving them to their own problems.

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17. Explain two reasons why there is some danger in leaving yourself or a friend to handle depression completely by oneself.

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18. List the ways that you like to express yourself that keep you in touch with your creative side, and may also help you sort out issues that weigh you down. Share your ideas with a trusted classmate, and perhaps make a time to share these creative outlets with one another. The class may like to list, with the teacher, the more "public" ways of self-expression.

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19. Write a description of how you feel when you are in the process or "flow" of great self-expression or enjoyment, e.g. playing a football or netball match, writing a song; riding a horse or motorbike. Research the work of Csikszentmihalyi, who wrote a book on the process of "flow", about the deep satisfactions of intense concentration to generate high achievement levels.

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20. List psychologist Monica's key points in the later part of the program.

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21. Explain the main points made by Dr Eugen Koh in the later part of the program.

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22. Optional personal reflection question - for your own benefit only - list some of the behaviours you know that you do when you get down - what is your individuality in this area? What do you do when you're feeling down? What do you need to "bring you up" again? Who are the best people for you to see, who will help you to get back on your feet again, and how do they help you? What do the people who love you recommend that you do to move out of the rings of depression?

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23. In the program. Explain how the boy who is depressed is helped out of this state by caring friends. What do they do to help him away from the "black dog" of depression?

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24. Why, would you say, does a film about depression have a female rather than a male in the role of carpenter - what is the effect upon our perceptions about roles?

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25. What does the apprentice carpenter say about shame and how it can hold anyone back from taking helpful action about depression?

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26. Define the word "stigma" and explain how it can be so dangerous in the case of depression.

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27. Why, would you say, would any local, state or federal government think it was a good use of taxpayers' money to offer, "first free consultation" at a community health centre about depression? Shouldn't everybody pay on a user basis for this kind of service? What are the benefits of having a free first treatment? (discuss with class)

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28. What kinds of brain research techniques can you list, that may help in future treatments of depression? E.g. research Positron Emission Technology, Magnetic Resonance Imaging and better trials by drug companies of anti-depressants i.e. normed and tested specifically for teenagers.

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29. Research the term "neuropsychimmunology" - Swinburne University, Victoria, Australia, has offered courses in this subject on the interactions of brain, thinking and chemistry. How could this area affect the future of loosening the mask of teen depression?

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30. Re-state the main sections of this program and three major points that you will be able to ACT UPON, next time you notice the "black dog" sneaking up upon you, a family member or friend.

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### **After Viewing the Program**

1. Ask students to research definitions of depression from dictionaries and the web.
2. Ask class to list different websites, using different search engines (e.g. [www.askjeeves.com.au](http://www.askjeeves.com.au), or medical websites, not only google) to find first ten listings on depression.
3. Students should focus on, and list in their planners or notebooks, their local area services, to provide practical information, telephone contacts and action steps, so that they or a friend can locate immediate help in times of need.
4. Contact your school equivalent service of the Australian group ARAFMI - (Association for Relatives and Friends of the Mentally Ill) - to organise a guest speaker and case worker for your class about how to sustain mental health, and what to do if a slide out of mental health into mental illness is noticed by yourself or friends.
5. Contact your local, state or national art gallery (Vic, Australia: 03-8620 2340) to arrange a class excursion to have a guided tour by exhibition artworks with a theme of distorted perception or depressive pieces. Make distinctions between different types of mental illness here - stigmas and definitions about different types of mental illness need to be clarified with students. The Cunningham Dax Gallery in Royal Park, Melbourne, Australia is dedicated to the ethical display of artworks by people who have suffered mental illness, and welcomes student tours on its weekly open day, Thursdays. (03 9342 2394; [admin@daxcollection.org.au](mailto:admin@daxcollection.org.au))
6. Ask a local GP and/ or school counsellor, to visit the class to discuss confidential services available for teens who may suspect that they, a member of their family, or a friend, are suffering the symptoms of depression.
7. Invite a member of the class's local youth services department to discuss and outline services and networks of help available for depressed teens in city and rural areas.
8. Screen other films e.g. from the VEA catalogue, or from Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI catalogue) that de-stigmatise the treatment of and help -seeking for teen depression. Use class discussion notes to personalise the film for each student, while protecting personal privacy, in small-group formats. Emphasise to students that for ethical and privacy legislation reasons, no individual should ever be identifiable in such discussions - blurting out a person's name is not acceptable. Identity can be camouflaged simply by saying "I know someone who..."

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### Useful Resources

- Website with game for minimisation of harmful effects of depression; game entitled "Playing the Blues", regarding an article in Australia's *Age* newspaper, Greenguide section, "Livewire": (regarding Geoff Gallop resignation) <http://www.theage.com.au/news/breaking/online-game-helps-beat-the-blues/2006/01/31/1138590505534.html>
- Lifeline 13 1114 - key message is NEVER LEAVE ALONE AN INTENSELY SUICIDAL PERSON. Anyone who has a specific plan to carry out suicide should be taken to immediate medical assistance; teens should not cope alone with a depressed friend, without adult guidance leading them to medical help. The time for privacy promises has passed; any helping teen in a reverse situation would want his/her own life saved.
- Kids Help Line
- Sane Help line
- Orygen Youth Health Services, Victoria, Australia
- Emergency Departments of local and major city hospitals
- Johnsgard, Keith, *"Conquering Depression and Anxiety through exercise"*, 2004, Prometheus Books, New York
- Gallop, Rick, *"The GI Diet"*, 2002, Random House, Canada
- Jamison, Kay Redfield *"Night Falls Fast - Understanding Suicide"* 1999, Knopf, NY and Picador
- Jamison, Kay Redfield *"Manic Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament"* 1993, Simon and Schuster
- Glasser, William *"Warning - Psychiatry Can be Hazardous to your Health"* - concerns raised about using only the medical model, despite its many strengths, to recover from depression.
- Rowe, Jessica and Penelope *"The Best of Times, The Worst of Times - our battle with manic - depressive illness"* 2004
- Russell, Sarah *"The journey of recovery"* 2003 - full advocacy of medication, in combination with other networks of support
- Many book titles refer to "the black dog" of depression, a term minted by Sir Winston Churchill in his battles with depression - these can be accessed, as can many titles, at [www.amazon.com.uk](http://www.amazon.com.uk), as well as at the Black Dog Institute, Sydney, Aust.
- Many texts advocate a multi-pronged approach to depression, including teen depression. Exercise, diet, teen social networks, spiritual work and steady achievement of re-focused personal goals, in addition to focused professional counselling and anti-depressants that have been normed and trialled specifically for teens, are recommended by many most recent texts. The medical model on its own rarely deals with the multi-layered causes and habits of depression. The road to recovery requires tenacity, self-care and patience - the film brief team wishes all who need it much good fortune and strength of heart and mind for this journey of recovery.
- Mate, Gabor, *"When the Body Says No"* 2000 - an excellent text on silent resistance by the body to depressing and overwhelming conditions experienced by people of any age, and how the immune system can respond, speaking truths that the person cannot directly say.

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- Remen, Naomi: *"My Grandfather's Blessings"* - a first-class 1990s text about spiritual wisdoms to cope with very depressing life circumstances; see also *"Kitchen Table Wisdom"* by same author - excellent material on family members with life-threatening illnesses.
- Carr-Gregg, Dr. Michael -any works by this Australian teen psychologist are worth getting for your school library.
- Myss, Carolyn: *"Anatomy of the Spirit"* - an excellent reference on deeply troubling, depressing matters that affect the holistic spiritual and mental well-being of individuals of any age.
- Teens who practice a religious faith should also consider making an appointment with their minister, priest, Sunday School teacher or other spiritual mentor, to bring all faith resources to the treatment of their depression.
- Bulk-billed family counselling can sometimes be found through local hospital resources - many times a depressed teen can be the "safety valve" for family dynamics that need attention without the teen being the scapegoat; confidential counselling can be arranged.