ANXIETY & DEPRESSION

Anxiety occurs when we experience feelings of fear, misgiving, apprehension or uneasiness. Depression generally occurs as a reaction to stress, with feelings of perhaps initial sadness becoming ones of despondency and dejection over a period of time.

There are many different ways in which a person can present with these conditions. Rather than defining each of these separately, I would like to consider aspects that can be common to all.

Depression often occurs as a result of problems over and above the normal pressures of life, as a reaction to loss of power or control over ones life.

The person will often not recognise that they have become depressed. They find that the joy has gone out of living; they can’t make an effort to do things. They may become forgetful, tearful, will withdraw from social activities, will appear agitated and to just “give up”. They will experience feelings of acute hopelessness and despair. To those around this person they may appear to be oversensitive and to overreact to almost anything. The person feels that they are losing control, they cannot concentrate, they generally eat and sleep poorly and they have difficulty making decisions. Feelings of insecurity and lack of confidence in the depressed person may result in that person becoming increasingly dependant on their spouse/carer. When depression occurs, the person becomes very inward looking, only considering their own needs. Often they develop a whole range of physical symptoms or conditions that are real to them but are in fact manifestations of their depression.

In the book “Ms Means Myself”, Gladys Hunt lists the five “Ds” that feed depression: disappointment, discouragement, disillusionment, dejection and defeat. Iris Barrow (counsellor) would also add the following: harbouring resentments and hurts, self pity, lack of forgiveness of self and of others, unrelieved loneliness, being unneeded and passivity.