

Social skills training needed for people with depression

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(Medical Xpress)—People with depression should receive specific training and treatment in how to interpret and act in social situations, in a bid to overcome one of the major issues faced by depressive people, according to researchers at the University of Adelaide.

In a review of the role of "[social cognition](#) in [depression](#)", published in

the journal *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, researchers from the University's Discipline of Psychiatry argue that negative perceptions of social situations experienced by people with depression are much more important than previously thought.

"There is significant evidence to show that people with major depressive disorders experience [social situations](#) coloured by their often negatively biased mood states, and they can interpret social signals quite differently to other people" says senior author Professor Bernhard Baune, Head of Psychiatry at the University of Adelaide.

"The difficulties with social interaction may, at least in part, be due to an altered ability to adequately interpret emotional stimuli and mental states of oneself and of others. This seems to persist even when the person's depression is in remission.

"However, based on all of the evidence available, it's our belief that a significant number of people with [major depression](#) will respond to some form of intervention, such as [social skills](#) training," Professor Baune says.

Professor Baune says social skills are critical for people to have good "functional" outcomes – such as in the workplace, in social groups, and for successful relationships.

"This is an important dimension in depression that often gets overlooked," he says.

"But consider the impact on people's ability to work and to function within a team, or to have a long-lasting and healthy relationship, which is extremely important for people's well-being. These aspects of life, if they are not working well for people, can further contribute to and deepen depression.

"We believe that treatment for these issues should go beyond the normal psychological therapy and pharmacological treatments currently being offered to patients," he says.

Professor Baune says although not everyone suffering from depression would be ideal for social skills training, it would be possible to have a positive, long-term impact on many patients.

"We know that some therapies have the ability to change people's thinking and perception, it's just a matter of how you unlock the social potential in each individual that may vary slightly from one person to the next. However, this area is too important to keep ignoring and we believe it should be investigated further as a possible extension of the standard treatments," Professor Baune says.

More information: "A review of the role of social cognition in major depressive disorder." *Front. Psychiatry* 5:179. [DOI: 10.3389/fpsyt.2014.00179](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2014.00179)

Provided by University of Adelaide

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