

Understanding Depression

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Agenda

What is depression?

Types and symptoms of depression

Causes of depression

Treatment options

Ways to reduce the risk of developing depression

Helping others with depression

Intervening with suicide

Helping yourself with depression



What is Depression?

- Depression is a medical condition that affects the whole body (mood, thoughts, body and behaviors)
- Depression is not a sign of personal weakness
- It is a biological-chemical process in the brain
- About 1 person in 20 suffers from depression severe enough to require medical attention
- Most people with depression do not seek help
- Only about 20% with depression are receiving adequate help

Symptoms of Depression

- Fatigue and decreased energy, and sad depressed mood
- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies previously enjoyed
- Feeling helpless, hopeless and worthless
- Feelings of excessive inappropriate guilt
- Insomnia or excessive sleeping
- Irritability, restlessness
- Appetite loss and unintended weight loss
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details, making decisions
- Sudden or gradual changes in self-care and hygiene
- Thoughts of death or wishing to be dead

Depression vs. Grief

- Grief and depression can appear similar
- Both can be triggered by loss and have sadness as the primary emotion
- Often have problems with sleep and appetite, may become tearful and isolate

However there are major differences:

Grief

- Sadness comes and goes in waves
- Belief that they will feel different someday
- Recovers ability to function in about 2 -3 weeks
- Self-esteem is intact
- Can be consoled by others
- Rarely suicidal
- Doesn't require medical intervention

Depression

- Sadness is constant, doesn't go away
- Feels as if there is no future
- Remains incapacitated for months
- Self-esteem is affected; feels helpless and worthless
- Can't be consoled by others
- Higher risk of suicidality
- Benefits from medical treatment

Types of Depression

Major Depression

Chronic Depression or Dysthymia

Seasonal Affective Disorder

Bipolar Disorder

Post Partum Depression



Causes of Depression

The causes are not always known

Symptoms may appear for no apparent reason

Symptoms may be associated with a life crisis, stress or other illness

Depressive illnesses run in families



Risk Factors

- People who lack the social support of a spouse, friends, and family, or with poor communication in their relationships
- People whose lives are out of balance: poor eating, little exercise, sleep disturbance, illness, alcoholism or other addictive behaviors
- Depression may be precipitated by loss of ability to function in an especially valued area of life
- People who have chronic medical conditions or persistent pain
- People who have rigid personalities, perfectionistic tendencies, compulsivity

Gender and Age Differences

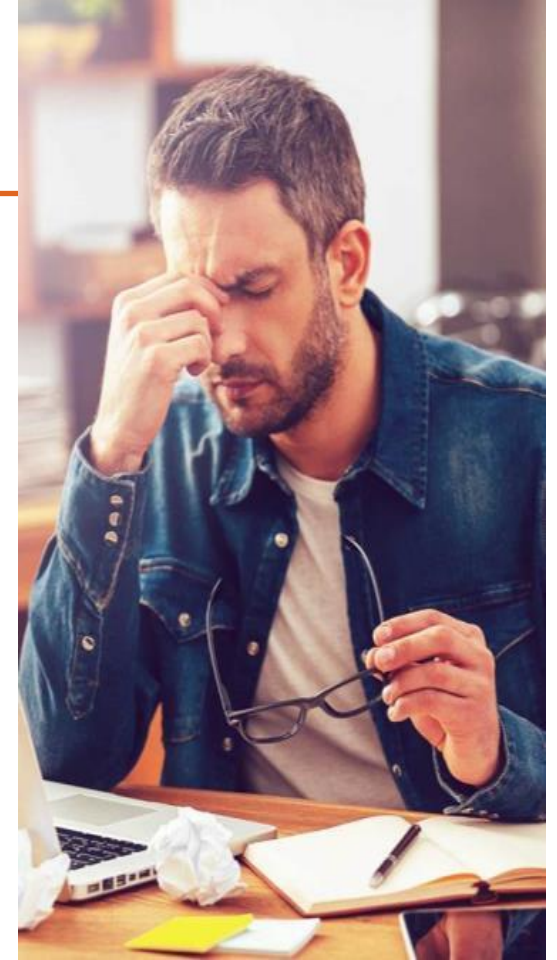
Women – greater frequency

Men – less likely to seek treatment

Elderly – highest suicide rates

Children – difficult to recognize but often predictive of future problems

Adolescents – depression often co-occurs with other problems like anxiety, substance abuse and eating disorders



Treatment Options and Providers

- Psychotherapy
 - Employee Assistance Program/Counseling
 - Family doctor
- Medication
 - Psychiatrist
- Combination (Therapy and Medications)
- Hospitalization



Helping Others – Don'ts

- Don't argue about how bad things are or challenge expressions of hopelessness
- Don't insist that depression or sadness are the wrong feelings to be experiencing
- Don't try to "cheer up" a depressed person
- Avoid critical or shaming statements
- Don't become angry even though your efforts may be resisted or rejected

Intervening with a Depressed Person

- Listen and validate feelings of sadness, grief, anger and frustration
- Emphasize that depression is treatable
- Encourage them to seek professional help - go with them to the counseling center or help make the call
- Stress confidentiality
- Be supportive of counselor or doctor suggestions
- Take seriously any suggestion or talk of suicide

Warning Signs of Suicide

- Talking or writing about death or dying or making comments like “What’s the point of living?” “Life is meaningless” or “No one would miss me if I were gone”
- Seeking lethal means such as saving pills, buying or asking to borrow a gun
- Giving away possessions
- Asking about details of their life insurance policy, especially as it relates to cause of death
- Showing interest in end-of-life affairs such as making a will or discussing funeral preferences
- Sudden calmness after a depression or severe moodiness/agitation

What to Do

If someone is thinking about suicide, the situation must be taken seriously!

Ask – ask the person about suicidal thoughts

Agreement – get their agreement to accept help

Arrange – help them to connect with resources

Helpful or Not Helpful?

1. “This may be a silly question, but you aren’t suicidal, are you?”
2. “That’s not true. Your family loves you very much. Your death would be devastating.”
3. “When you’ve felt depressed in the past, what has helped you?”
4. “Everyone has problems like that. You’ll get through it, don’t worry so much.”
5. "Just think -- there are others who have it much worse than you do.”
6. “I know you feel miserable now, but with help, the way you’re feeling can change.”
7. “If you kill yourself, you’ll go to Hell.”
8. “What has been keeping you alive until now?”
9. “How are you thinking of killing yourself? Do you have a plan?”
10. “Maybe I don't completely understand how you feel, but I want to help.”

Helping Yourself – Don'ts

- Don't avoid treatment as a way of coping
- Don't use alcohol or illegal drugs to cope
- Don't make long-term commitments or important decisions unless necessary
- Don't assume things are hopeless
- Be aware of “emotional reasoning” (i.e., because I feel awful, my life is terrible)
- Be aware of taking responsibility for events which are outside of your control

Helping Yourself - Do

- Seek treatment – call the EAP
- Expect your mood to improve gradually, not immediately
- Break large tasks into small ones, set some priorities, and do what you can as you can
- Try to be with other people and confide in someone
- Participate in activities that may make you feel better or that you previously enjoyed
- Engaging in exercise, going to a movie, a ballgame, or participating in religious, social, or other activities

Thank You for Attending

Your single source for confidential support, expert information and valuable resources, when you need it the most.

Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Online: guidanceresources.com

