

DEPRESSION Can Be Treated

Most people with depression can be helped with medication and/or counseling.

What is depression?

- Depression is a problem that affects physical, mental, and emotional well-being.
- Depression can affect everyday activities and change how people think and feel about things and about themselves.
- Depression is *not* a sign of weakness, lack of faith, or just a passing “bad mood.”
- People with depression often cannot just “get over it.”
- Without treatment, symptoms can last months or even years.
- Symptoms of depression:
 - Sad, anxious, or “empty” mood that doesn’t go away
 - Problems sleeping (too much or too little)
 - Increase or decrease in appetite or weight
 - Constant worry
 - Feeling hopeless
 - Feeling guilty, worthless, or helpless
 - Loss of interest or pleasure in once-enjoyable activities (including sex)
 - Fatigue, low energy, feeling “slowed down”
 - Restlessness and irritability
 - Difficulty with memory, concentration or making decisions
 - Physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach aches, difficulty breathing, or unexplained pain that do not respond to treatment
 - Thoughts of death or suicide

What causes depression?

- Depression is thought to be an imbalance in brain chemicals that help control mood.
- Health problems, personal losses, abusive relationships, financial trouble, and other problems can trigger or worsen depression.
- Alcohol and drug use can trigger, worsen, and prevent recovery from depression.
- People with depression sometimes drink or use drugs, which makes the depression worse.
- Drugs and alcohol can cause bad reactions with medications used to treat depression.

Depression can occur at any age

- Depression in older people is often not properly diagnosed or treated and is often hard to separate from physical health issues and sleep or appetite changes.
- Depression in children can lead to acting out, emotional withdrawal, and behavioral problems at home or school.

Treating Depression

- Treatment may include medication, counseling, or both.
- People with moderate or severe depression often benefit greatly from medication.
- Many safe and effective medications are available to treat depression.
- Each person is different. Different medications, dosages and combinations may need to be tried to find out what works best. Medications can take 4 to 8 weeks to be helpful.
- Even when a person with depression starts to feel better, it is important to continue medications.
- Some medications must be stopped gradually (Always consult a doctor before changing, reducing, or stopping medication).
- Counseling can help depressed people:
 - Change negative thinking and behavior
 - Deal with people and situations better
 - Resolve conflicts that may contribute to depression
 - Engage in activities that can improve mood and help manage stress

How do you help someone who is depressed?

- Help connect them to treatment resources.
- Encourage the person to stay with treatment, or to *seek a change in treatment if there is no improvement after several weeks.*
- Encourage the person to avoid alcohol and other drugs.
- People with depression need emotional support, patience, and hope.
- *Do not ignore remarks about suicide.*
- Call 911 if the person is in immediate danger of an actual suicide attempt.

Important Phone Numbers

National Suicide Hotline: 1-800-273-TALK

Emergency: 911

Reactions to Severe Stress

Supportive Responses

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Excessive worry about the future- Difficulty sleeping- Problems concentrating- Feeling jumpy and/or nervous- Having a rapid heart beat and sweating | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Encourage person to take time each day to practice relaxation skills because these can help make it easier to sleep, think, and feel calm. <p>Breathing exercise to suggest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- "Inhale slowly through your nose and comfortably fill your chest all the way down to your stomach, while saying to yourself, "I am filled with calmness."- Exhale slowly through your mouth and comfortably empty your lungs, while silently saying to yourself, "I am releasing the tension."- Do this five times slowly, and as many times a day as needed." |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Concern or shame about having a change in mood and/or energy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Encourage person not to self-blame or feel guilty about feelings.- Encourage person to discuss concern with a trusted friend, family member or professional. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Feeling overwhelmed by tasks that need to be accomplished (for example, housing, food, paperwork for insurance, child care and parenting). | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Help identify top priorities.- Help make an action plan that breaks down priorities into specific, manageable tasks.- Take it one step at a time. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Intense, ongoing fear of another disaster.- Frequently thinking about the stressful event(s), even if you don't want to. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- When reminded of the event, encourage person to say to self, "I am upset because I am being reminded of the disaster, but it is different now because the disaster is not happening and I am safe."- Monitor and limit viewing of news reports about the disaster, especially around the anniversary. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Concerns about your ability to keep yourself and others safe.- Questioning one's trust in others and/or spiritual beliefs | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Encourage person to get involved helping others—assisting others has positive rewards- Remind the person that a more structured routine can help improve decision-making abilities and energy level.- Remind the person that sometimes going through a difficult time can have positive effects on a person, like reminding us what is most important to us or discovering inner strength we didn't know we had by bringing to the fore what one values and holds dear. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Using alcohol and/or drugs, or engaging in gambling or high-risk sexual behaviors. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Alcohol and drugs can be a dangerous way to cope with stress and often make the situation worse.- Remind the person that substance abuse and addictive behaviors can lead to problems with sleep, relationships, jobs, and physical health.- Provide referral to appropriate substance abuse support services. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Feelings of over-protectiveness toward family and friends- Feeling alienated from family and friends | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ask your friends and family how they are doing, rather than just giving advice- Encourage more time spent with family and friends in pleasant/social activities |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Sleep problems from feeling on edge and worried about adversities and life changes which can lead to problems falling asleep and staying asleep. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Encourage people to have regular sleep routines. <p>Give tips on how to improve sleep:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Try to go to sleep at the same time every day.• Don't drink caffeinated beverages in the evening.• Reduce alcohol consumption.• Increase daytime exercise.• Relax before bedtime.• Limit daytime naps to 15 minutes and do not nap later than 4 pm. |