

About Depression

Depression is a common illness that affects up to 12% of men and 25% of woman during their lifetime. The symptoms may persist for most of the day, nearly every day, or throughout the day. It may develop over days to weeks. The severity of it could also vary among individuals.

Depression is not merely feeling down and out. It could have a profound and devastating impact on individuals and families. Depression is a medical illness that can be treated with counseling and/or medication. It is not a weakness or character defect. Individuals suffering from depression are likely to experience:

- A depressed mood for most of the day
- Loss of interest in pleasurable/recreational pursuits
- Sudden changes and excess in eating and sleeping habits
- Feeling fatigued or rundown
- Persistent feelings of hopelessness
- Difficulties concentrating and/or making decisions
- Anxious feeling
- Feeling hopeless

Causes of Depression

There are both physical and psychological causes of depression. Some people are born being more susceptible to depression through family history, illnesses, and chemical imbalances. Others may be experiencing psychological or emotional causes involving death of loved ones, divorce, loss of job, or other life circumstances.

Treatment for Depression

If you are treated by a therapist, a variety of approaches may be introduced. One approach in and of itself, may not be the answer. A combination of approaches might significantly reduce your symptoms. Therapy can help you gain new insight and awareness into thoughts as well as, behavior that contributes to depression. Altering lifestyle and approach to life often have a positive impact on an individual. Included are some suggestions for addressing symptoms of depression.

Nutrition

Significant progress has been made in investigating how nutrition can influence mood and behavior. Caffeine is a nervous system stimulant which can affect sleep. Processed and sugary foods tend to deplete the body's energy reserves in the long run which could influence fatigue factors. Consider the use of vitamins and mineral supplements. Your doctor or other trained professionals can assist you in making nutritional choices.

Exercise

Exercise can help disrupt the pattern of depression and fatigue. The body becomes better able to handle the effects of physical and emotional stress. Exercise can positively affect the neurochemistry of the brain. Many find that going for walks, especially in the morning, can improve one's outlook on life. Exercising could also improve an individuals self confidence in setting and achieving physical goals.

Supportive Relationships

There is an increasing correlation between supportive relationships and health. Relationships provide encouragement and help fulfill a very important human need. Often being with others helps balance the focus between oneself and others. It is important to identify individuals who are truly supportive. Be careful to choose supportive people rather than those who may be negative or demanding. It is also important to understand people's limitations in giving support. Some individuals may not be able to offer the consistent support that you need. If you expand your resources through community networks (i.e., Y.M.C.A.'s, support groups, etc.), this would enable you to have the ongoing support you require.

Education

Individuals can learn about the treatment of depression from doctors, books, the Internet, and peers. Knowledge can be empowering and reduce depression symptoms because individuals understand their symptoms better.

Realistic Expectations

Sometimes, individuals have difficulties setting realistic expectations. Their goals for themselves are usually very high or low. Cognitive restructuring can be helpful in providing structure for realistic goal setting.

Rational Thoughts

Thoughts play a key role in influencing feelings and behavior. Cognitive restructuring can assist you in learning how to change often predictable and self-defeating thoughts. Through increased awareness and practice, unrealistic thought patterns can be replaced with more rational ones.

Medication

Medication can help stabilization of functioning and create opportunities for other aspects of treatment to be beneficial. Medication is often utilized when there is significant impairment in day to day functioning. Because each person differs biologically and psychologically, it is important to discuss the use of medication with your doctor or psychiatrist.

This handout was developed by:

**Myers
Counseling
Group, Ltd.**

300 Memorial Drive, Suite 200
Crystal Lake, IL 60014
(847) 263-1269
www.myerscounseling.com

About Depression

Information on depressive disorders and reduction of symptoms.