

Depression

Depression is a medical illness characterized by persistent sadness and loss of interest in everyday activities. Millions of people live with depression worldwide, but left untreated it can become debilitating and impact the ways you function at work, home, and in relationships. If you think you might have depression and aren't currently under the care of a medical or mental health professional, please seek professional diagnosis and treatment.

Common symptoms of depression:

- Irritability or angry outbursts
- Feeling worthless
- Sleep disturbance
- Appetite or weight changes
- Difficulty concentrating
- Withdrawal or isolation
- Neglecting personal hygiene
- Fatigue or low energy
- Feeling hopeless or helpless

Understanding your depression cycle

Triggers, thoughts, feelings and behaviors contribute to the onset and maintenance of your depressive symptoms. Exploring what triggers depression for you, as well as how you respond to these triggers is a powerful step in learning to manage your symptoms.

Triggers

Situations and life events can trigger, maintain, or worsen depression. Practice observing what tends to precipitate periods of depression for you. Common depression triggers include: relational conflict or distress, traumatic events, financial setbacks or concerns, illness or surgery, pregnancy or childbirth, changes in circumstances or routine.

Thoughts

People struggling with depression may get stuck in cycles of negative thinking. Some common thought traps are "worst-case scenario" and "negative self-talk." Observe your thoughts for negative patterns. How frequently do you interpret situations negatively or use words like "always, never, can't, if only, should have, shouldn't have" to criticize yourself?

Feelings

Feelings are powerful perceptions. They are your subjective response to triggers and thoughts. When depressed you may feel shame, guilt, stuck, self-protective, worthless, lonely, detached, or hopeless. Practice observing, naming, and challenging your feelings. Just because you feel stuck doesn't mean you are stuck.

Behaviors

When depression is triggered, the human instinct is to self-protect, numb, avoid, or fix. Common behavioral responses to the experience of depression include: isolating, substance use or addictive behaviors, neglecting personal hygiene or responsibilities, calling in sick to work, staying in bed, skipping meals, and self-harming behaviors. Explore what you typically do (or don't do) in response to your depression, and actively work to incorporate self-care, social engagement, and healthy patterns of behavior into your everyday routine.

For more help, or if you are feeling suicidal or distressed: Call 1-800-273-8255 or 988.