

DEPRESSION (UNIPOLAR)

Introduction

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Everyone has days where they feel blah, down, or sad. Typically, these feelings disappear after a day or two, particularly if circumstances change for the better. People experiencing the temporary "blues" don't feel a sense of crushing hopelessness or helplessness, and are able, for the most part, to continue to engage in regular activities. Prolonged anhedonia (the inability to experience pleasure), hopelessness, and failure to experience an increase in mood in response to positive events rarely accompany "normal" sadness. The same may be said for other, more intense sorts of symptoms such as suicidal thoughts and hallucinations (e.g., hearing voices). Instead, such symptoms suggest that serious varieties of depression may be present, including the subject of this document: Major Depressive Disorder or (more informally), Major Depression.

For people dealing with Major Depression, negative feelings linger, intensify, and often become debilitating.

Major Depressive Disorder (MDD), is a common yet serious medical condition that affects both the mind and body. It is a complex illness, creating physical, psychological, and social symptoms. Although informally, we often use the term "depression" to describe general sadness, the term Major Depression is defined by a formal set of criteria which describe which symptoms must be present before the label may be appropriately used.

Major Depression is a mood disorder. The term "mood" describes one's emotions or emotional temperature. It is a set of feelings that express a sense of emotional comfort or discomfort. Sometimes, mood is described as a prolonged emotion that colors a person's whole psychic life and state of well-being. For example, if someone is depressed, they may not feel like exercising. By not exercising for long periods of time, they will eventually experience the negative effects of a sedentary lifestyle such as fatigue, muscle aches and pains, and in some cases, heart disease.

Many people are puzzled by the term "Unipolar Depression," which is another term for MDD. The term "Unipolar Depression" is used here to differentiate Major Depression from the other famous sort of depression, Bipolar (or Manic) Depression, which is a separate illness. It is helpful to think of mood states as occurring on a continuum. During a particular day or week, people can shift from good (or "up") moods, to bad (or "down") moods, or remain somewhere in the middle ("neutral" mood). A

person who experiences significant impairment related to shifting between up and down moods often has Bipolar Disorder (discussed in more detail later). Bipolar Disorder can be envisioned as a seesaw movement back and forth between two poles or mood states ("bi" means "two"). In contrast to people with Bipolar Disorder, people with Major Depression remain on the down mood pole; they do not exhibit mood swings. Because they are stuck on the down or depressed end of the mood continuum; they experience a unipolar ("uni" means "one") mood state.

Mood disorders rank among the top 10 causes of worldwide disability, and Major Depression appears first on the list. Disability and suffering is not limited to the individual diagnosed with MDD. Spouses, children, parents, siblings, and friends of people experiencing Major Depression often experience frustration, guilt, anger, and financial hardship in their attempts to cope with the suffering of their friend or loved one.

Major Depression has a negative impact on the economy as well as the family system. In the workplace, depression is a leading cause of absenteeism and diminished productivity. Although only a minority of people seek professional help to relieve a mood disorder, depressed people are significantly more likely than others to visit a physician. Some people express their sadness in physical ways, and these individuals may undergo extensive and expensive diagnostic procedures and treatments while their mood disorder goes undiagnosed and untreated. As a result, depression-related visits to physicians account for a large portion of health care expenditures.

Although the origins of depression are not yet fully understood, we do know that there are a number of factors that can cause a person to suffer from depression. We also know that people who are depressed cannot simply will themselves to snap out of it. Getting better often requires appropriate treatment. Fortunately, there are a wide array of effective treatments available.

The current document provides an in-depth look at Major Depression by summarizing symptoms and diagnostic criteria, prevalence and course, historical and contemporary understandings of the causes of the illness, and assessment and treatment.

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http://www.mentalhelp.net/poc/view_doc.php?type=doc&id=438&cn=5

Depression - Information and Treatment

Depression is one of the most common psychological problems, affecting nearly everyone through either personal experience or through depression in a family member. Each year over 17 million American adults experience a period of clinical depression. The cost in human suffering cannot be estimated. Depression can interfere with normal functioning, and frequently causes problems with work, social and family adjustment. It

causes pain and suffering not only to those who have a disorder, but also to those who care about them. Serious depression can destroy family life as well as the life of the depressed person.

Impact of Depression:

- **Causes tremendous emotional pain**
- **Disrupts the lives of millions of people**
- **Adversely affects the lives of families and friends**
- **Reduces work productivity and absenteeism**
- **Has a significant negative impact on the economy, costing an estimated \$44 billion a year**

Depression and bipolar depression are presented separately on this website because of the unique problems encountered with bipolar disorder. Individuals interested in information about bipolar disorder should also review the information on depression, as bipolar disorder usually includes depressive episodes as well. Bipolar disorder was formerly called manic-depressive disorder. It is a type of depression, and it is characterized by the presence of mood swings, especially "manic highs" that often result in high risk, self-damaging behavior. Most individuals with bipolar disorder have both depressive episodes and hypomanic episodes.

Depression is a psychological condition that changes how you think and feel, and also affects your social behavior and sense of physical well-being. We have all felt sad at one time or another, but that is not depression. Sometimes we feel tired from working hard, or discouraged when faced with serious problems. This too, is not depression. These feelings usually pass within a few days or weeks, once we adjust to the stress. But, if these feelings linger, intensify, and begin to interfere with work, school or family responsibilities, it may be depression.

Depression can affect anyone. Once identified, most people diagnosed with depression are successfully treated. Unfortunately, depression is not always diagnosed, because many of the symptoms mimic physical illness, such as sleep and appetite disturbances. Recognizing depression is the first step in treating it.

Nearly two-thirds of depressed people do not get proper treatment:

- **The symptoms are not recognized as depression.**
- **Depressed people are seen as weak or lazy.**
- **Social stigma causes people to avoid needed treatment.**
- **The symptoms are so disabling that the people affected cannot reach out for help.**
- **Many symptoms are misdiagnosed as physical problems**
- **Individual symptoms are treated, rather than the underlying cause.**

Clinical depression is a very common psychological problem, and most people never seek

proper treatment, or seek treatment but they are misdiagnosed with physical illness. This is extremely unfortunate because, with proper treatment, nearly 80% of those with depression can make significant improvement in their mood and life adjustment.

<http://www.psychologyinfo.com/depression/index.html>

Depression In Teenagers

Let's Talk About Depression

Approximately 4 out of 100 teenagers get seriously depressed each year. Sure, everybody feels sad or blue now and then. But if you're sad most of the time, and it's giving you problems with:

- your grades
- your relationships with your family and friends
- alcohol, drugs, or sex
- controlling your behavior in other ways

then the problem may be - DEPRESSION

The good news is.... you can get treatment and FEEL BETTER SOON

- [What is depression?](#)
- [Symptoms of Depression](#)
- [Symptoms of a Manic Episode](#)
- [Talk to Someone About Depression](#)
- [Treatment for Depression](#)
- [What About Suicide?](#)
- [Why do people get depressed?](#)
- [Alcohol, Drugs and Depression](#)
- [Myths About Depression](#)

[Other Psychology Links](#)

What is Depression?

Clinical Depression is a serious illness that can affect anybody, including teenagers. It can affect your thoughts, feelings, behavior, and overall health.

Most people with depression can be helped with treatment. But, most depressed people never

get the help they need. And, when depression isn't treated, it can get worse, last longer, and prevent you from getting the most out of your life. Remember, you're only a teenager once.

How do I know when I'm depressed?

How can I tell if a friend might be depressed?

First, there are two kinds of depression: The sad kind, called major depression, dysthymia or reactive depression, and manic-depression or bipolar illness, when feeling down and depressed alternates with being speeded-up and sometimes acting reckless.

If you have had several of these symptoms, and they've lasted several weeks, or cause a big change in your routine, you should talk to someone who can help, like a psychologist, or your school counselor!

WHEN YOU'RE DEPRESSED..

- You feel sad or cry a lot and it doesn't go away.
- You feel guilty for no real reason; you feel like you're no good; you've lost your confidence.
- Life seems meaningless or like nothing good is ever going to happen again.
- You have a negative attitude a lot of the time, or it seems like you have no feelings.
- You don't feel like doing a lot of the things you used to like-- like music, sports, being with friends, going out-- and you want to be left alone most of the time.
- It's hard to make up your mind. You forget lots of things, and it's hard to concentrate.
- You get irritated often. Little things make you lose your temper; you overreact.
- Your sleep pattern changes; you start sleeping a lot more or you have trouble falling asleep at night. Or you wake up really early most mornings and can't get back to sleep.
- Your eating habits change; you've lost your appetite or you eat a lot more.
- You feel restless and tired most of the time.
- You think about death, or feel like you're dying, or have thoughts about committing suicide

[Top of Page](#)

[Teen Depression Topics](#)

[Other Psychology Links](#)

WHEN YOU'RE MANIC...

- You feel high as a kite... like you're "on top of the world".
- You get unreal ideas about the great things you can do... things that you really can't do.
- Thoughts go racing through your head; you jump from one subject to another, and you talk a lot.
- You're a nonstop party, constantly running around.
- You do too many wild or risky things: with driving, with spending money, with sex, etc.
- You're so "up" that you don't need much sleep.
- You're rebellious or irritable and can't get along at home or school, or with your friends

[Top of Page](#)

[Teen Depression Topics](#)

[Other Psychology Links](#)

Talk to Someone About Depression

If you think you're depressed... **TALK TO SOMEONE!**

If you are concerned about depression in yourself or a friend, **TALK TO SOMEONE WHO CAN HELP.** There are many people who you can talk to:

- a psychologist
- your school counselor
- your parents, or a trusted family member
- your family doctor
- your clergy
- a professional at a mental health center

Remember - Depression can affect people of any age, race, ethnic, or economic group

[Top of Page](#)

[Teen Depression Topics](#)

[Other Psychology Links](#)

Treatment for Depression

LET'S GET SERIOUS HERE.

Having depression doesn't mean that a person is weak, or a failure, or isn't really trying... it means they need **TREATMENT.**

Most people with depression can be helped with **COUNSELING,** provided by a professional

psychologist, and some are helped with Counseling and Medicine.

COUNSELING, or psychotherapy, means talking about feelings with a trained psychologist who can help you change the relationships, thoughts, or behaviors that are causing the depression. Think about it, you feel depressed because you think your life is bad. What if you're wrong? What if you're missing all the good things around you? What if your future holds a lot more promise than you think? When you're depressed, you're in a rut, and you can't see anything good. You need to talk to someone who can help you get out of that rut! Don't wait, ask your parents, or your school counselor for help today.

MEDICINE is used to treat depression that is severe or disabling. Antidepressant medications are not "uppers" and are not addictive. When depression is so bad that you can't focus on anything else, when it interferes with your life in an overwhelming way, medication might be necessary, in addition to counseling. But most often, counseling alone is sufficient.

With treatment, most depressed people start to feel better in just a few weeks.

So remember, when your problems seem too big and you're feeling low for too long,

YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

There's help out there and you **CAN** ask for help. And if you know someone who you think is depressed, **YOU CAN HELP**. Listen and encourage your friend to ask a parent or a responsible adult about treatment. If your friend doesn't ask for help soon, talk to an adult you trust and respect-- especially if your friend mentions suicide. Your friend's life is more important than keeping a secret!

[Top of Page](#) [Teen Depression Topics](#) [Other Psychology Links](#)

What About Suicide?

Most people who are depressed do not commit suicide. But depression increases the risk for suicide or suicide attempts. It is **NOT** true that people who talk about suicide do not attempt it. Suicidal thoughts, remarks, or attempts are **ALWAYS SERIOUS...** if any of these happen to you or a friend, you must tell a responsible adult **IMMEDIATELY**it's better to be safe than sorry.

[Top of Page](#) [Teen Depression Topics](#) [Other Psychology Links](#)

Why do people get depressed?

Sometimes people get seriously depressed after something like a divorce in the family, major financial problems, someone you love dying, a messed up home life, or breaking up with a boyfriend or girlfriend. Other times, depression just happens. Often teenagers react to the pain of depression by getting into trouble: trouble with alcohol, drugs, or sex; trouble with school or bad grades; problems with family or friends. This is another reason why it's important to get treatment for depression before it leads to other trouble.

[Top of Page](#) [Teen Depression Topics](#) [Other Psychology Links](#)

Alcohol, Drugs and Depression

A lot of depressed people, especially teenagers, also have problems with alcohol or other drugs. (Alcohol is a drug, too.) Sometimes the depression comes first and people try drugs as a way to escape it. (In the long run, drugs or alcohol just make things worse.) Other times, the alcohol or other drug use comes first, and depression is caused by :

- the drug itself, or
- withdrawal from it, or
- the problems that substance abuse causes.

And sometimes you can't tell which came first... the important point is that when you have both of these problems, the sooner you get treatment, the better. Either problems can make the other worse and lead to bigger trouble, like addiction or flunking school. You have to be honest about both problems-- first with yourself and then with someone who can help you get into treatment... it's the only way to really get better and stay better.

*REMEMBER: YOU CAN HELP YOURSELF,
OR A FAMILY MEMBER,
OR A FRIEND
FIND TREATMENT FOR DEPRESSION.*

DO IT NOW!

[Top of Page](#) [Teen Depression Topics](#) [Other Psychology Links](#)

Myths about depression

Myths often prevent people from doing the right thing. Some common myths about depression:

- **MYTH:** It's normal for teenagers to be moody; Teens don't suffer from "real" depression.
FACT: Depression is more than just being moody. And it can affect people at any age, including teenagers.
- **MYTH:** Telling an adult that a friend might be depressed is betraying a trust. If someone wants help, he or she will get it.
FACT: Depression, which saps energy and self-esteem, interferes with a person's ability or wish to get help. It is an act of true friendship to share your concerns with an adult who can help. No matter what you "promised" to keep secret, your friend's life is more important than a promise.
- **MYTH:** Talking about depression only makes it worse.
FACT: Talking about your feelings to someone who can help, like a psychologist, is the first step towards beating depression. Talking to a close friend can also provide you with the support and encouragement you need to talk to your parents or school counselor about getting evaluated for depression.

<http://www.psychologyinfo.com/depression/teens.htm>

Causes of Depression

You may have heard people talk about chemical imbalances in the brain that occur in depression, suggesting that depression is a medical illness, without psychological causes. However, all psychological problems have some physical manifestations, and all physical illnesses have psychological components as well. In fact, the chemical imbalances that occur during depression usually disappear when you complete psychotherapy for depression, without taking any medications to correct the imbalance. This suggests that the imbalance is the body's physical response to psychological depression, rather than the other way around.

Some types of depression do seem to run in families, suggesting a biological vulnerability. This seems to be the case with bipolar depression and, to a lesser degree, severe major depression. Studies of families, in which members of each generation develop bipolar disorder, found that those with bipolar disorder have a somewhat different genetic makeup than those who are not diagnosed.

However, the reverse is not true. Not everybody with the genetic makeup that causes this vulnerability to bipolar disorder develops the disorder. Additional factors, such as stress and other psychological factors, are involved in its onset as well. Likewise, major

depression also seems to occur, generation after generation, in some families, but not with a frequency that suggests clear biological causes. Additionally, it also occurs in people who have no family history of depression. So, while there may be some biological factors that contribute to depression, it is clearly a psychological disorder.

A variety of psychological factors appear to play a role in vulnerability to these severe forms of depression. Most likely, psychological factors are completely responsible for other forms of mild and moderate depression, especially reactive depression. Reactive depression is usually diagnosed as an adjustment disorder during treatment.

People who have low self-esteem, who consistently view themselves and the world with pessimism, or who are readily overwhelmed by stress are more prone to depression. Psychologists often describe social learning factors as being significant in the development of depression, as well as other psychological problems. People learn both adaptive and maladaptive ways of managing stress and responding to life problems within their family, educational, social and work environments. These environmental factors influence psychological development, and the way people try to resolve problems when they occur. Social learning factors also explain why psychological problems appear to occur more often in family members, from generation to generation. If a child grows up in a pessimistic environment, in which discouragement is common and encouragement is rare, that child will develop a vulnerability to depression as well.

A serious loss, chronic illness, relationship problems, work stress, family crisis, financial setback, or any unwelcome life change can trigger a depressive episode. Very often, a combination of biological, psychological, and environmental factors are involved in the development of depressive disorders, as well as other psychological problems. When you feel depressed, and don't know where to turn, talk to someone who can help.... a psychologist.

<http://www.psychologyinfo.com/depression/causes.html>

For more information, also visit these websites:

<http://www.depression.com/>

http://www.clinical-depression.co.uk/learning_path.htm

http://www.yellowribbonsd.org/pages/the_yellow_ribbon_suicide_prevention_program.htm

[http://www.yellowribbon.org/Brochure%20\(Outside\).PDF](http://www.yellowribbon.org/Brochure%20(Outside).PDF)