



DEPRESSION: HOW TO SPOT IT & HOW TO BOUNCE BACK

Dominique Talley, MSW

www.forrest.talley

Copyright 2018

Depression

Depression is a common mental illness that can have a serious impact on a person's ability to function in everyday life.

Sometimes depression seems to come out of the blue, and other times depression can come following a major life event (such as after childbirth, following the loss of a loved one, etc.).

Although people often use the word depressed to describe a sad mood, clinical depression (also called "major depressive disorder") is more than just feeling sad – it includes an overwhelming sense of sadness that lasts for a very long time (at least

multiple weeks on end, and often longer) and keeps you from being able to do the things you normally do (like go to work/school, engage in social activities, take care of yourself, etc.).

Feeling sad is a normal emotion for people to have once in a while, but depression is much more extreme than that. Because depression can have such serious effects on a person's life, it should be treated with the help of a mental health professional.

The good news is that there are very effective ways to help people with depression to manage their

symptoms and live normal, happy lives. If you are experiencing some of the symptoms below, talk to a mental health professional about what treatments are available to you.

How to Spot Depression

The following are some of the symptoms of depression:

- *Feeling sad, numb, hopeless, or “empty” most days of the week*
- *Feeling worthless, guilty, or helpless*
- *Irritability*
- *Fatigue or low energy*
- *Trouble with concentration/memory*
- *Eating significantly more or less than normal*
- *Trouble with sleeping*
- *Thoughts of hurting or killing yourself*

If you (or someone you love) have been experiencing some of the above symptoms for two or more consecutive weeks, you should speak to a mental health professional who can help you find ways to feel better and manage those symptoms.

It is not necessary to experience all of the above symptoms to be depressed; in fact, most people will have only some, but not all, of the symptoms listed. But those that they do have, if they are truly depressed, will be very strongly expressed. They will significantly interfere with living a happy life.

It is particularly important to know that if you (or a loved one) have been struggling with thoughts of suicide, then it is time to consult with a therapist. This is true even if you do not have any other depressive symptoms! Don't wait, don't hesitate or put it off. Simply make an appointment to see a therapist ASAP.

You can also call the National Suicide Hotline at any time (they provide 24/7 confidential support and resources). The National Suicide Hotline may be reached at: 1-800-273-8255. (Online chat is also available at: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>)

How to Treat Depression

There are many effective treatments available to treat depression and help individuals to manage their symptoms so that they can experience happiness again and live normal, full lives.

The best treatment depends on the individual, his/her symptoms, and his/her lifestyle and preferences. For many people, a combination of treatments works best. Your therapist or another mental health professional should help you explore your options, and the benefits/risks of each treatment before you decide on which will be most helpful for you in treating your specific symptoms.

Antidepressant Medications

Your brain sends messages using chemicals called "neurotransmitters." Sometimes people become depressed because their brain has too many or too little of a certain type of chemical, and is unable to send the right messages with the chemicals it does have.

Antidepressant medications help your brain to get the proper balance of those chemicals and use them correctly, which will help to alleviate depression.

Talk Therapy

Often it is hard to talk about depression and the symptoms you

experience with other people, but that can be one of the most helpful things for treating depression.

Working with a therapist or mental health professional means you have a safe place to talk about your feelings.

Additionally, depression can play tricks on your mind and teach your mind to think about and perceive the world in ways that keep you spiraling further and further into depression – it becomes a cycle that keeps you depressed. Mental health professionals like psychologists and therapists are trained to help you figure out those thoughts and patterns that are

helping to keep you stuck, as well as to help you learn new, healthy thought patterns that will help you get out of the spiral of depression.

Lifestyle

Depression affects how you are able to take care of yourself and how you relate to others. Your physical and relational health, however, can have a huge impact on how you feel. So avoiding friends and neglecting to take care of yourself can drive you further into depression.

A good way to combat this is to take steps to care for your physical and relational health. Making

healthy improvements to your diet (eating more vegetables and drinking less alcohol, for example), being more physically active (such as going to the gym or taking a walk after dinner), and staying connected with friends who are positive influences (such as going to dinner with friends) can all help you to feel better.

These positive lifestyle habits create momentum that can help propel you forward as you tackle depression and start enjoying life again.

Conclusion

It is important to remember that treatments often take a bit of time before the full effect is experienced. You may begin to notice changes and feel a little better after the first month, but it may also take longer before you notice significant changes.

It is also important to be consistent with whatever treatment(s) you choose – that may mean showing up to weekly appointments with a therapist, taking a daily antidepressant, going for a walk each evening, or spending more time with friends.

The main thing is to approach the task of beating depression with an open mind. Experiment with different approaches until you find those that work for you. If one method does not cause you to feel better after three months, try another.

In the end, with persistence and hard work, you will see depression begin to fade, and a happier fuller life take root.