
Understanding Adjustment Disorders

Most people have stress in their lives, and sometimes you may have more than you can handle. You may find it hard to cope with a particularly stressful event. As a result, you may become anxious and depressed. You might even get sick. These can be symptoms of an adjustment disorder. But you don't have to suffer. Ask your healthcare provider or mental health professional for help.

Symptoms of adjustment disorders

Symptoms of adjustment disorders include:

- Hopelessness
- Frequent crying
- Depressed mood
- Trembling or twitching
- Fast, pounding, or fluttering heartbeat (palpitations)
- Health problems
- Withdrawal from social contacts and situations
- Anxiety or tension
- Sleeping too much or too little

What is an adjustment disorder?

Adjustment disorders sometimes occur when life gets to be too much. They often appear within 3 months of a stressful time. The symptoms vary widely. You might pretend the stressful event never happened. Or you might think about it so much you can't eat or sleep. In most cases, your feelings may seem beyond your control.

What causes it?

The events that trigger an adjustment disorder vary from person to person. Adults may be troubled by work, money, or marriage problems. Teens are often more likely bothered by school or conflict with parents. They also may find it hard to cope with a divorce or sexual issues. The death of a loved one can be especially hard to face for all family members. So can major life changes, such as a move. Or even a positive event like a promotion. Poverty or a lack of social skills may make matters worse.

What can be done?

Adjustment disorders can almost always be helped by therapy. You may feel relieved just to talk to someone. In some cases, only you and your therapist will meet. In others, your whole family may be involved. You might also join a group for people with this disorder. The support and concern of others can help you recover more quickly.