

Depression: More Than Sadness

"I didn't think I had depression or that I would ever get depression. It wasn't something that I've ever talked to my family about or my doctors about."

"It was getting in the way of my relationships. It was getting in the way of my ability to function at school. I felt like I was paralyzed by whatever this was going on in my mind and in my body."

Life does not always go like we want it to. When we lose a job, fail an exam, or when a loved one dies, we feel sad. But there's a difference between sadness and experiencing the lasting effects of depression.

"When I first told people this is what I have, a lot of the responses I received were, 'Why do you have depression?' And how do you answer that? I don't know why I have it. I don't know where it came from so I think people were mixing it up with sadness, and they're two different things."

Depression is a mood disorder in which feelings of sadness, loss, anger or frustration interfere with everyday life for weeks or longer.

Symptoms of depression include: a depressed or irritable mood most of the time; trouble sleeping or sleeping too much; change in appetite, often with weight gain or loss; tiredness and lack of energy; feelings of worthlessness, self-hate or guilt; difficulty concentrating; feeling hopeless or helpless; repeated thoughts of death or suicide.

"Depression has many symptoms and it can be really individual. For most people, it's characterized by sadness. For kids it can be irritability, lack of motivation or enjoyment of things is also present, poor sleep, poor appetite, sometimes even feelings that life's not worth living or suicidal thoughts can be part of depression."

"My depression looks like the sadness just becomes too overwhelming, and I might start to stare off and then just start to cry, even if I'm in a public place. Even if I'm with people I care about. It also looks like me wanting to stay in my bed. I start to feel really bad about myself, think about a lot of negative things, focus on failure, shortcomings; feeling like I'm not good enough."

"What is depression, is a difficult question to answer because depression can look so different in some people. So one person who's depressed could be very tearful and losing sleep, losing weight, agitated, restless, and another person with depression, they could be kind of numbed and apathetic and sleeping way too much, gaining weight and really lethargic."

The causes of depression are thought to be the result of three related factors: biological, psychological and social.

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“There are a variety of factors that tend to contribute. So changes in brain chemistry or neurotransmitters have been looked at as a contributor to depression. Often there are environmental stressors, and so people who experience things like a divorce or a job loss, or a major life event may experience depression as a result of that as well. And then for others it might be a combination of those genetic factors, or more biological factors along with the environmental factors as well.”

If you're suffering with depression, you're not alone. Millions of Americans are getting the treatment to successfully take control of their lives.

If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with depression, it's important to get the proper treatment.

“Depression is quite treatable and there are a number of different treatment options out there for individuals with depression. There are therapy options that have a lot of research support. There are medications, and then there are some newer treatments out there that are more on the medical side. So things like Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation and other kind of other more recent advances are available as well.”

“People should know that's it's OK to go get help and it's OK to talk about it and I know it's really hard to do both of those things, but you have to help yourself first and in the end it's totally worth it. I'm in a completely different spot than I was a year ago.”

“Treatment is available, help is available; even if our minds tell us it's not worth it, it's not going to work, it's too scary. Whatever it is, it exists, it's - help is real, and recovery is possible.”