



WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

No one really knows the exact chemical basis that causes depression. So, while you may feel bad now, there is hope!

Depression is common that there are a huge amount of scientists working around the world to help you and/or someone you know who is suffering.

The recovery phase involves understanding the issues that impact you, including an examination of stress levels and your ability to cope.

Before you read on ...

No one really knows the exact chemical basis that causes depression, but most everyone who experiences depression recovers and feels good again. It's a step-by-step process, but the first small step leads to the next one and, with help, you'll be able to cope with life again.

SO, WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

There are FIVE main types of depression .

Major depression: a depressed mood that lasts for at least two weeks. This may also be referred to as clinical depression or unipolar depression.

Dysthymia: a less severe depressed mood that lasts for years described as regularly low, dark or sad mood. Mixed depression and anxiety - a combination of symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Psychotic depression: a depressed mood which includes symptoms of psychosis.

Psychosis: involves seeing or hearing things that are not there (hallucinations), feeling everyone is against you (paranoia) and having delusions.

Bipolar disorder: (formerly known as manic depressive illness) - involves periods of feeling low (depressed) and high (manic).

SIGNS OF DEPRESSION

- moodiness that is out of character
- increased irritability and frustration
- finding it hard to take minor personal criticisms
- spending less time with friends and family
- loss of interest in food, sex, exercise or other pleasurable activities
- being awake throughout the night
- increased alcohol and drug use
- staying home from work or school

- increased physical health complaints like fatigue or pain
- being reckless or taking unnecessary risks (e.g. driving fast or dangerously)
- slowing down of thoughts and actions

Depression can be caused by a life event, a chemical imbalance or even poor diet. Yes, what you eat (or don't eat) can make you depressed!

TALK ABOUT IT

Talk to a trusted loved one or friend. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Talking out feelings of hopelessness and isolation can be the first step to recovery. And don't stop at one person, if they're not able to help - keep searching for an ally/ies.

SEE A QUALIFIED HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

Seeing a qualified health professional like a doctor can help determine the cause of depression. If you're not sure of the cause, start with your family general physician. If you know that your depression is brought on by a life situation, ask your physician for a referral to a psychiatrist or psychologist. If a referral is not available, call your community mental health organisation such as 'beyondblue' or 'Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia' for a referral or for treatment.

COUNSELLING OR THERAPY CAN HELP

Talking out problems with a mental health professional can be helpful in treating depression. No matter how trivial you consider your problems to be, or how hopeless you feel in doing anything about them, a mental health professional takes your problems seriously and gives you undivided attention and direction. The experience of safety and understanding from a mental health professional can be a positive step on the road to recovery.

MEDICATION IS AVAILABLE

Some types of depression respond well to medication. This must be decided by a doctor, usually a psychiatrist.

USEFUL REFERENCES

Beyond Blue www.beyondblue.org.au

Depressionet www.depressionet.com.au

Mental Health Council of Australia www.mhca.com.au

Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia www.mifa.org.au

Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria www.mifellowship.org

Mental Health Services Website Victoria www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth

Mindhealthconnect www.mindhealthconnect.org.au

National Alliance of the Mentally Ill (NAMI) (USA) www.nami.org

SANE Australia www.sane.org

MORE
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