

## A Look at Depression

### Common Characteristics of Depression

Common characteristics of depression include:

1. A consistently depressed mood that is largely unchanged or altered over time. The mood is not alleviated by activities or that would normally bring about some degree of relief.
2. A markedly diminished interest or pleasure in all or almost all activities of the day. Activities that were once considered enjoyable or pleasurable hold little or no interest.
3. Significant weight loss or weight gain. Eating patterns shift, often resulting in a loss of appetite or excessive eating.
4. Insomnia or hypersomnia. Sleeping patterns tend to involve little sleep with the individual awakening frequently throughout the night, or sleeping for extended and abnormally long periods of time.
5. Psychomotor agitation where the individual experiences slower than usual physical reactions. Fine motor skills may also be compromised or diminished.
6. Fatigue or loss of energy. Sleep, relaxation or other interventions do little to increase energy level.
7. Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt.
8. Diminished ability to think or concentrate. Thoughts are often more fragmented and random.
9. Recurrent thoughts of death.

### Depression in Males and Females

Depression has been shown to occur in both sexes but that it is less frequent in men. It appears to be more crisis-oriented in men. Men get depressed over specific problems, such as a business problem or an illness. However, they are less likely to experience the vague, generalized, sometimes indefinable feeling of discouragement that some women encounter on a regular basis. Even a cloudy day may be enough to bring on a physical and emotional slowdown for those who are particularly vulnerable to depression. That kind of emotional fluctuation is more common in women.

### Depression in Children and Adolescents

It has been believed that depression was exclusively an adult problem. However, that perception is changing. Depressive features are now being recognized in children as young as five years old.

Some of the symptoms of depression in a child or adolescent may include general lethargy, a lack of interest in things that used to excite him or her, sleep disturbances, chewed fingernails, loss of appetite, violent emotional outbursts, social withdrawal and regressive behaviors. Other reactions are stomach complaints and low tolerance for frustration.

If depression is a problem for your child, it is often symptomatic of something else that is bothering him or her. It is important to help him or her verbalize feelings. Try to anticipate the explanation for sadness, and lead the child into conversations that provide an opportunity to ventilate. Make yourself available to listen, without judging or belittling the feelings expressed. Simply being understood is soothing for children and adults alike.

If the symptoms are severe or if they last more than two weeks, it would be advisable to seek professional help for your child. Prolonged depression can be destructive for individuals of any age and is especially dangerous to children.

### What You Can Do

1. Get a regular physical checkup.
2. Find people who will support you or pray for you regularly.
3. Develop some type of regular exercise routine in your schedule.
4. Watch what you eat. Minimize your sugar and caffeine intake.
5. Take up a hobby or some type of interest so you are not immersed in demands on a 24 hours a day.
6. Take a vacation. Leave your I-Pad, cell phone, etc. behind for an extended period.
7. Develop a daily stress management plan.
8. Do not try to be a messiah to everyone.
9. Create boundaries that balance your needs with the needs of others.
10. Seek counsel as needed either from a professional counselor, a pastor, your family doctor, etc.
11. Consider medications if symptoms are significantly impairing. Seek a medical professional for evaluation.

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## **HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU WOULD BENEFIT FROM COUNSELING?**

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These conditions or situations are widely experienced and may indicate the need for professional counseling:

- Depression, discouragement
- Lack of motivation, apathy
- Anger, bitterness, resentment
- General dissatisfaction with life or relationships
- Difficulties in handling life events
- Marriage and family conflicts
- Sexual dysfunction
- Difficulties in decision making
- Physical ailments for which no medical cause can be found, such as headaches and lower back pain. (Medical consultation may be required in conjunction with therapy.)
- Difficulty in building and maintaining satisfying relationships
- Job stress, inability to keep jobs
- Inability to deal with a child's misbehavior or school problems
- Compulsive behaviors (eating disorders, spending, sexual issues)
- Issues related to low self-esteem or lack of self-worth
- Excessive dependence upon the approval or validation of others

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## **DEPRESSION**



*Facts on Understanding  
And Dealing  
With  
Depression*