

## The Road to Depression Recovery

Just as the symptoms and causes of depression are different in different people, so are the ways to feel better. What works for one person might not work for another, and no one treatment is appropriate in all cases. In most cases, the best approach involves a combination of social support, lifestyle changes, emotional skills building, and professional help.

**Medications.** Because there is a biological component to depression, medications can assist in recovery. Most studies have found medication is most effective when it is used in conjunction with therapy.

**Psychotherapy.** Talking therapy with a counselor can also help. Evidence-based therapies for depression are Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Interpersonal Therapy.

**Lifestyle Changes.** Regular exercise can be as effective at treating depression as medication. Eating small, well-balanced meals throughout the day will help you keep your energy up and minimize mood swings. Ensuring you get enough sleep, and minimizing stress are also important.

**Social Support.** Strong social networks reduce isolation, a key risk factor for depression. Keep in regular contact with friends and family, or consider joining a class or group. Volunteering is a wonderful way to get social support and help others while also helping yourself.

**NOTE:** All of these depression treatments take time, and sometimes it might feel overwhelming or frustratingly slow. That is normal. Recovery usually has its ups and downs.

***If you or someone you know may be suffering with depression, you can contact us for professional psychotherapy, assessment, and/or psychiatric consultation.***

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## ***Understanding Depression***

Demystify a condition that while impairing and many times intolerable, is also CURABLE.

## What is Depression?

Depression is a common, impairing mental illness characterized by sadness, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, feelings of tiredness, and poor concentration.

## How Common is Depression?

About 1 in 10 suffer from depression, and every person will experience depression an average of 3x in their lifetime. (NIMH)

The World Health Organization estimates that by 2020, depression will be the 2nd leading cause of disability worldwide and by 2030, the largest contributor to worldwide disease burden.

## What Causes Depression?

Most likely, depression is caused by a combination of genetic, biological, environmental, and psychological factors.

Neurotransmitters in the brain — specifically serotonin, dopamine, or norepinephrine — affect feelings of happiness and pleasure and may be out of balance in people with depression.

Depression may also result from stressful life events. The type of stressful event most likely to lead to depression is an uncontrollable negative event.

Having a negative view of your self, the world, the future is also common among people with depression, as well as unhelpful thinking patterns such as oversteering the negative.

Lack of support systems (e.g. friends and family members one can talk to) also increases the risk for the condition.



## What Depression is NOT:

- It's not just sadness
- It's not weakness of character
- It's not self-indulgence
- Mood to snap out of
- Something to be taken lightly

## Sadness vs. Depression

Everyone feels sad sometimes -- it's a normal human emotion. Generally, sadness is triggered by a difficult, hurtful, challenging, or disappointing event or situation. When the situation or event resolves, your sadness subsides.

Depression doesn't need a trigger. You feel sad about everything. And it's more than how you feel --it affects the way you think, perceive, and behave. Depression is an abnormal emotional state that can negatively impact how you function in all situations.

## Symptoms of Depression

*If you have been experiencing five or more of the following symptoms for 2 weeks or more, you may have depression. It's important to consult a mental health professional for proper diagnosis.*

- \* Trouble concentrating, remembering details, and making decisions
- \* Fatigue
- \* Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, and helplessness
- \* Pessimism and hopelessness
- \* Insomnia, early-morning wakefulness, or sleeping too much
- \* Irritability
- \* Restlessness
- \* Loss of interest in things once pleasurable, including sex
- \* Overeating, or appetite loss
- \* Aches, pains, headaches, or cramps that won't go away
- \* Digestive problems that don't get better, even with treatment
- \* Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" feelings
- \* Suicidal thoughts or attempts

NOTE: A major cause of suicide is depression. People feeling suicidal are overwhelmed by painful emotions and see death as the only way out, losing sight of the fact that suicide is a permanent "solution" to a temporary state—most people who try to kill themselves but live later say they are glad they didn't die. Most people who die by suicide could have been helped. If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts, seek immediate professional help. *Relief from painful emotions is possible.*

