

## Depression summary

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### Symptoms of Depression:

- Depressed mood- feeling sad
- Lack of interest in activities
- Changes in appetite/changes in weight. Loss or gain
- Changes in sleep. Too much or too little
- Feeling restless
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt/ lowered self-esteem
- Difficulty focusing or concentrating
- Irritability/agitation/angry outbursts
- Thoughts of self-harm or suicide

Three levels of severity in depression: Mild, Moderate and Severe:

**Mild** depression may be when an individual has some of the symptoms of depression but not consistent enough to meet criteria. A day or two inconsistently of not feeling motivated, not completing basic tasks, and a change in appetite does not mean that you are having a depressive episode.

**Moderate:** Individuals with moderate depression are starting to find that their symptoms are beginning to impact or affect their everyday life.

- Canceling plans with friends or family;
- Struggling to complete tasks;
- Feeling more self-conscious or insecure about themselves;
- Having difficulty making simple decisions;

**Severe:** Individuals who suffer with severe depression have more significant impairment in functioning. They may frequently experience:

- Difficulty getting out of bed in the morning;
- Calling out of work more regularly,
- Late on deadlines or bills;
- Seem to be more irritable or easily agitated; and
- May even express or have thoughts of wanting to hurt themselves.

**Causes of depression:** There are three primary causes of depression.

### **Biological factors**

Depression can be caused from our genetic make-up, hormones, or chemistry in the brain.

It can be helpful if you know if there is a history of mental illness in the family. Does the individual suffering from depression have someone else in their family, (for example: a mother, father, aunt, uncle, grandparent, or sibling), who have already exhibit symptoms of depression or who have already been diagnosed with depression or some other mental illness?

### **Situational factors**

Depression can be caused by a traumatic event, such as rape, sudden stress, or major life change. Some examples of this may be the impact of the pandemic, ending of a relationship, loss of a job, or sudden death of a loved one.

### **Combination of the two**

The individual suffering from depression does not only have a biological predisposition to depression, but now has a major stressor as well.

### **Warning signs of depression:**

- Feeling excessively sad or low
- Confusion or problems concentrating
- Extreme mood changes
- Prolonged or strong feelings of irritability or anger
- Avoiding friends and social activities
- Difficulty understanding or relating to people
- Changes in sleep habits

- Changes in eating habits
- Lacking insight to changes in own's behavior or feelings
- Inability to do daily activities or handle daily problems or stress
- Changes in weight or increased concern with appearance
- Thoughts of suicide

### **Warning signs in children:**

- Changes in school performance
- Frequent disobedience or aggression
- Hyperactivity
- Withdrawing
- Not wanting to do activities enjoy

### **Suicide:**

Suicide is the 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the United States. Depression is a key risk factor for suicide in addition to individuals who have experienced some form of violence, such as child abuse, bullying, or sexual violence. The most common indicators that someone is thinking about suicide are:

- Abrupt changes in mood and behavior
- Dramatic mood swings or sudden uplift in mood after prolonged period of despair.
- Talking about feeling worthless, hopeless, feeling like a burden, or like others would be "better off" without me.

### **Treatments for depression:**

#### **Psychotherapy:**

Psychotherapy is meant to be a supportive and safe space that provides the individual an opportunity to talk freely without judgement.

**Cognitive behavior therapy or CBT.** Research has shown that CBT has a high success rate in the treatment of depression.

- helping the individual to identify their triggers
- educates them on irrational thoughts
- assists them in identifying ways to think about those thoughts differently
- help the individual to develop problem solving strategies to cope with their depressive symptoms.

**Transcranial magnetic stimulation, (TMS):** A type of brain stimulation therapy. It is a noninvasive treatment that uses electromagnetic pulses to stimulate nerve cells.

**Biofeedback:** The idea behind biofeedback is that by using the power of your mind and becoming more aware of what is going on inside your body, you can gain more control over your health.

### **Medications:**

Medications can also be a part of the treatment especially in the following circumstances:

- If the depressive symptoms are severe. Sometime the neurons in the brain are just not firing right.
- If there is a strong family history of depression.
- If after extensive therapy and some improvement the individual is still struggling.

### **Impact of depression on family and friends:**

#### **What can you do?**

- Learn about depression
- Encourage your loved one to get help. Talk to them. Suggest seeking help from a professional. Ask them for ways you can help.

- Seek support for yourself. You need support too from friends, loved ones, and even a professional
- Take time for yourself. Loving someone who is depressed can be difficult and stressful. It is okay to find some time to do things you enjoy, for you to be active and have some time to focus on you.
- Be patient. Even though depression does improve with treatment, everyone's response to therapy and or medications can vary.

**Helpful websites:**

National Alliance on Mental Illness: [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

Johns Hopkins Medicine Mental and Behavioral Health: [www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/mental-and-behavioral-health](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/mental-and-behavioral-health)

If you have any questions about the presentation or the information provided in this handout, please feel free to contact me at [janeen2sam@gmail.com](mailto:janeen2sam@gmail.com)