

DEPRESSION

Everybody feels sad sometimes. Life has its ups and downs. Depressive feelings that last a few days are a normal part of life and there is nothing to worry about. Generally these depressive periods are associated with stressful events and they fade away with the positive changes in our lives.

Clinical depression is different from sadness, disappointment and grief, that all of us experience, in terms of both intensity and duration. There are major changes in emotions, thoughts, behavior and self-regard of a clinically depressed person. For example, making simple decisions, paying the bills, attending to classes and returning phone calls may become too hard to do for them.

A depressed person usually thinks over negative things, focuses on negative experiences, defines him/herself as unsuccessful, says that everything is hopeless and thinks that he/she is a burden on other people. Severe and/or long-lasting depression may impair self-esteem and cause thoughts about death/suicide.

A depressed person experiences most of the following for a long period of time:

- **Feeling depressed or empty**
- **Loss of interest or pleasure in life**
- **Crying bursts, sadness and/or irritability**
- **Insomnia or hypersomnia**
- **Significant changes in weight and appetite**
- **Fatigue, loss of energy**
- **Difficulty with concentration and making decisions**
- **Feelings of hopelessness, worthlessness and weakness.**
- **Inappropriate guilt and self-criticism**
- **Decreased sexual interest**
- **Suicidal thoughts or suicide attempts**

Why me?

There is no simple answer to that. The reason of clinical depression is an integration of biological, genetic, psychological and social factors. Major life changes, stressful events, hormonal changes, alcohol and drug use may cause one to get depressed or depression to get more severe. However, sometimes depression may occur without an apparent reason. At this point, it is important to remember that depression is not caused by weakness, a personality flaw, laziness, personal failure or lack of willpower.

What can I do?

First, determine your emotional and behavioral complaints that may be associated with depression and assess the areas of your life (family, relationships, school, etc.) that may be affected by these complaints.

- Think about why you are feeling this way. Listen to your emotions and give yourself time to understand them.
- Encourage yourself to start over and question your negative thoughts. Even if they seem too strong to you right now, try you face your negative thoughts and oppose them.
- Avoid criticizing and blaming yourself. Depression is not a sign of laziness, weakness or bad attitude; it is a common psychobiological condition.
- Stay active
- Do not give in to the desire to remain in bed for hours.
- Continue whatever you are doing nowadays, remaining behind your schedule may make you feel worse.
- Don't run after unattainable goals.
- Reduce or eliminate unnecessary stuff. Divide your tasks into small and easily manageable parts.
- Be realistic – it is highly probable that there are things that you have succeeded at doing and seeing these will renew your self-esteem. Don't exaggerate your mistakes and failures as if your life is composed of them.
- Do not fight alone: reach people you trust.
- Try to spend time with people who support you and you can be honest with.
- Keep your telephone close to you; when you feel sad, call somebody.
- If you cannot reach a person or you feel worse while you are talking; ask for his/her permission, hang up and call somebody else.
- Make a list of the times when you feel happy.
- Do things that you may enjoy.
- Engage in some kind of daily physical activity, for example walk everyday.

- Accept depression and don't be ashamed about it.
- If you are recommended to take medication, take it – it will increase your energy and motivation.
- Be patient to yourself – healing takes time.

What should I avoid doing?

- Avoid ignoring treatment as a way of dealing with depression. Depression is one of the most treatable conditions. If you think you are depressed, get help immediately.
- Avoid making abrupt decisions and engaging in new enterprises, unless it is necessary.
- Avoid stressful or intense situations.
- Avoid assuming that everything is hopeless.
- Avoid emotional reasoning (e.g. "I feel awful, it means that my life is awful")
- Avoid assuming responsibility for events outside your control
- Avoid depending on alcohol or drugs in order to get rid of painful feelings. Because this will make you feel worse in the long run.

Treatment of depression

Most of the depressive conditions can be treated, without hospitalization, by medication or psychotherapy, and research shows that the combination of them is the most effective method. Complaints can be totally eliminated for most of the people. If you have questions or concerns about treatment, you can consult to a counselor or a doctor.

For More Information

Psychological Counselling Department

(The services are available only to the students and staff of Ýstanbul Bilgi University.)

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