Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Assessing If You Are Depressed

All of us feel blue sometimes when sad events happen or when life doesn't go according to plan. Usually we snap out of it after a while and get back on an even keel. This is different from depression, which is a clinical condition requiring expert support and treatment.



Unfortunately, many people don't understand that this difference exists and continue to believe that depression is merely a sign of weakness. As a result, many people don’t seek professional help, which means a large number of individuals struggle alone. Given the range of successful treatments that are available, this is completely unnecessary. So let's take a look at some of the signs that call for concern.

Tips and Tools You Can Use

Recognizing when the line has been crossed to depression, is key to finding a solution. However, it's important to understand that symptoms can vary according to the triggers and your personality. Talk to your doctor about your concerns. Meanwhile, here are some tips to help you understand depression:

Causes of Depression

- Biological changes within the brain combine with a variety of lifestyle, stress or personality contributors.
- Contributing stresses may include bereavement, divorce, major lifestyle changes, traumatic events and serious illness of self or a loved one.
- Heredity can play a role.
- Personality factors can make some people more vulnerable, especially introverts, worriers and pessimists.
- Isolation and lack of social support can be a potential contributor.
- Certain illnesses can trigger an imbalance in biological chemicals in the brain.
- Postpartum depression is a condition that can arise following the hormonal changes of pregnancy and delivery.

Symptoms May Include

- Disinterest in getting up to start each day.
- Sad, dark mood.
- A feeling of lethargy, fatigue or restlessness.
- Changes in appetite, weight and sleeping patterns.
- Reduced interest or pleasure in activities.
- Lowered self-esteem.
- Feeling that life is purposeless and empty.

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- Irrational feelings of guilt.
- Thoughts of hurting self or others.
- Thoughts of death or suicide.

Steps you Can Take

- Talk to a health professional. Highly successful treatments are available and he or she will recommend the right one for your symptoms.

- If your family doctor prescribes medication, it is important to keep taking it even if symptoms at first persist. Many medications take 3-6 weeks to be effective.

- Walk, jog or attend a fitness club regularly. Exercise aids the release of endorphins, which contribute to a feeling of well-being.

- Follow healthy sleep habits—go to bed at the same time each night. Consider a warm bath or drinking a mug of milk before bed to encourage relaxation.

- Follow a balanced, nutritious diet.

- Cut back or eliminate caffeine, alcohol and nicotine.

- If you have suicidal thoughts or thoughts of hurting others, call your local distress centre or crisis line immediately.

This article is not intended to replace professional consultation. Please see your doctor for all medical concerns.