Overcoming depression: A new horizon

Are you withdrawing from friends and normal activities? Do you feel irritable, restless, helpless, and worthless or run down? Are you experiencing headaches, digestive disorders or other chronic pain?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, you may be suffering from depression. Although depression is a normal reaction to disappointment or losses in life, it can severely disrupt your life. For this reason, it is important to learn more about depression and the different types of treatment.

**Causes**

Causes of depression can vary from individual to individual. It can be triggered by a traumatic life event, changes in life, sudden illness, extreme change in diet, drugs or alcohol, or for unknown reasons. It also can gradually develop over the years or be caused by a chemical change in the body.

In many cases, depression lasts just a few days or a week and people return to normal. But in many cases, depression requires treatment – either counseling or medication or both.

Depression can be classified as mild, moderate and severe. Understanding each state and the related symptoms makes treating depression much easier.

**Mild Depression**

Mild depression, or the everyday “blues,” usually lasts for a short period of time and doesn’t seriously interfere with normal activities. The blues may be brought on by holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, or even boredom and frustration. It usually resolves itself, but it can sometimes develop into moderate or severe depression.

**Moderate depression**

Moderate depression is similar to the blues but is characterized by a feeling of hopelessness. The depression is more intense and longer lasting than during the mild state. A death in the family, career setback, unemployment, etc., can lead to the depression. Often those with moderate depression need the help of a counselor to feel better.

**Severe depression**

Severe depression is very serious because it affects your desire and ability to function normally. Inner conflicts, alcoholism, or drug abuse may be related to depression. This form requires the help of a professional because it could become disabling.

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**How to fight depression**

If you feel “down” you may find these methods helpful to fight depression:

- Get together with friends
- Read a book
- Go for a walk or exercise
- Change your routine and try something new
- Keep active

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**Signs**

Lack of interest in the outside world, major behavioral changes, and a decline in physical health are signs of severe depression.

For those with severe depression, many activities seem depressing, and a person begins looking at the world through dark-colored glasses. Everyday events that are normally pleasing suddenly seem too difficult, too anxiety-provoking.

Depression can cause serious problems if not treated. Feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness can lead to poor school or work performance, drug and alcohol abuse, suicide attempts, and other tragic consequences.

Using drugs and alcohol to cope will backfire. Both intensify the depression.

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**For more help**

You can discuss your feelings with a friend, relative, family doctor or member of the clergy. Or talk to a counselor, whose objective viewpoint can take overwhelming feelings and put them into perspective. To make an appointment, call (810) 257-3740. In an emergency, call Crisis Services at (810) 257-3740, or toll-free at (877) 346-3648, where a counselor is available 24 hours a day. TTY users call (810) 232-6310.

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