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Types of Depression

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Major Depression

When people say "seriously depressed," this is what they mean. Major depression often causes despair and hopelessness so profound that the person loses interest in life, becomes incapable of feeling pleasure and sexual arousal, and may be unable to get out of bed or eat for days at a time. But this illness may also cause other symptoms not easily recognized as depression: weight loss or gain; anxiety, irritability, or agitation; chronic indecisiveness; or sleep disturbances (insomnia or sleeping all the time). In other words, you can suffer a major depression and NOT FEEL BLUE.

Very often, major depression strikes without any triggering loss. This can be confusing and frustrating for both the person affected, and his or her loved ones. We want our illnesses to have clear causes. But many serious diseases do not: diabetes, cancer, arthritis. That's how it is with major depression. It's a serious disease that often develops with no discernible triggering event.

Officially, according to DSM-IV, major depression involves at least two weeks of deep despair and at least four of the following:

- Sleep problems. Insomnia or sleeping all the time.
- Appetite problems. Loss of appetite or major weight gain.
- Lack of energy. Apathy, lethargy, no interest in anything.
- Feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, and/or terrible guilt.
- Difficulty concentrating, or unusual indecisiveness.
- Suicidal thoughts, or suicide attempts.

Beyond the almost unbearable misery it causes, the big risk in major depression is suicide. Within five years of suffering a major depression, an estimated 25 percent of sufferers try to kill themselves. The myth is that people who talk about suicide don't attempt it. The fact is that many people announce their intention before their suicide attempts. Take any talk of suicide very seriously. Call the person's doctor immediately.


Topics

- [Normal Depressed Mood and Grief](#)
- [Adjustment Disorder with Depressed Mood](#)

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Normal Depressed Mood and Grief

These conditions are natural reactions to losses in life. They involve sadness, lethargy, and in serious cases, for example, grief after the death of a loved one, often despair, anger, insomnia, poor appetite, or weight gain, obsessive thoughts about the lost person, and terrible guilt about any problems in the depressed person's relationship with the deceased individual. What makes these reactions normal is that people eventually recover. After losing a ball game, it may take a day or two to bounce back. After a lay-off, it may take a few months. After the death of a loved one, it may take a year. If they don't recover, they have a clinical depression and should call a doctor.

Normal Depressed Mood and Grief presume a triggering life event. If you or anyone you know displays these symptoms without a loss, or if the depression seems out of proportion to the loss--not getting a raise and sobbing inconsolably for days--call a doctor.

Topics

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