

Coping with Depression

Introduction

Everyone has experienced feelings of depression at one time or another. These feelings commonly follow loss or disappointment and they usually pass in a few hours or days. When depressive feelings, however, persist and interfere with one's health and social well-being, then some sort of intervention or professional help is needed.

What is Depression?

Depression is a prolonged and persistent negative mood which can color and interfere with many aspects of one's life. It is characterized by feelings of worthlessness, excessive guilt, loneliness, sadness, hopelessness, and self-doubt. Suicidal thoughts may also be present. Normal everyday depression can last for a few minutes to a few days. We've all felt these periods of being "down" or "sad." These feelings are a normal part of being human. On the other hand, depression that becomes intense and lasts for extended periods of time may be a dysfunctional form of depression, something beyond the "everyday sort." This more serious type of depression can often be helped by seeing a mental health specialist.

What Causes People to be Depressed?

- Significant loss.
- Loss of control over the environment. The person feels that nothing can be done to change unfortunate events in life.
- Unrealistic expectations.
- Disappointment.
- Perceived failure.
- Negative thinking which gradually becomes self-defeating.

Symptoms of Depression

1. Emotional Symptoms

- Sadness.
- Anxiety.
- Guilt.
- Anger.
- Mood swings.
- Helplessness.
- Hopelessness.

2. Physical Symptoms

- Sleeping too much or too little.
- Overeating or loss of appetite.
- Constipation.
- Weight loss or gain.
- Irregular menstrual cycle.
- Gradual loss of sexual desire.

3. Behavioral Symptoms

- Crying for no apparent reason.
- Withdrawal from other people and new situations.
- Getting angry easily.
- Being unmotivated to set or meet goals.
- Loss of interest in one's physical appearance.

