



November 18th, 2012

Beyond Feeling Blue – Clinical Depression

For many of us, feeling blue from time to time is a normal part of life. But when it's tough to make it through the day, it's important to understand the symptoms and treatment of clinical depression.

Are you depressed?

Although individual symptoms can vary, the following symptoms may indicate that you are suffering from clinical depression:

- you have trouble sleeping or you have trouble getting out of bed
- you can't think clearly or find that previously easy tasks are now difficult
- you feel despondent and powerless
- you have lost weight or you have gained weight
- you are much more irritable, short-tempered, or aggressive than usual
- you have feelings of worthlessness or guilt or life is not worth living (Seek help immediately if this is the case)
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A recent study has looked the relationship between alcohol use and depression in women. While there is a relationship, the study was less clear was whether alcohol use precipitated a depressive episode or whether alcohol use was a self-medicating tactic to manage depression. Regardless, it can become a vicious cycle, so seek more appropriate therapy.

Dysthymia is a mood disorder, not as crippling as a major depression but it still reduces your "zest for life." It occurs more often in women than in men and affects up to 5% of the general population. Although you are still able to go through the motions of day-to-day life, you experience symptoms similar to depression and they persist for at least 2 months. Dysthymia is often missed and lasts an average of 5 years. Many effective therapies exist, so don't suffer needlessly.

Depression Action Plan

Creating an action plan is the first step to the road of depression. The challenge about depression is that it requires taking action. But due to depression, doing things that help break the cycle may seem impossible.

Here are some things to add to your plan:

1. **Build the right relationships**

Creating and sustaining relationships that are supportive can help offer perspective when you experience depression. Talk to friends and family who can help and give you the assistance when you need it the most.

2. Challenge negative thinking

Dealing with depression is about how you judge the situations, and what you expect for the future. Switching your thoughts to create a more balance outlook is more than “thinking positive”. Socialize with the right people, avoid overgeneralization and keep a log of negative thoughts to track your “self-talk”.

3. Sleep, Vitamin D and Stress Management

Taking care of yourself is an important part of managing depression. Sleeping 8 hours, staying active and getting outside to get Vitamin D is part of adopting a healthy lifestyle to manage stress.

Get close to a pet. According to a study in the Journal of the American Geriatric Society, seniors with a pet suffer lower rates of depression than those who don't. In addition to giving you someone else to focus on, they provide companionship, improve self-esteem and calmness and even reduce blood pressure and stress hormone levels. Not to mention the benefits of getting out for a daily walk!

4. Eat the right food

Food can make a big difference on your mood. Creating a diet rich in complex carbohydrates, vitamin B and omega 3 will help stabilize your mood and give your brain a boost. Add the right mix of protein, complex carbohydrates, fruits and vegetables to feel good.

5. Seek additional help

Talking to a professional can get you the help you need. Depression can be treated. Following these elements can improve the speed of recover and avoiding future bouts of depression.

In my experience, talking to a pharmacist can help. Share your symptoms with us for a fresh perspective on your individual situation.