Depression

Depression is the most common of the mental disorders but is very treatable. It is more than a feeling of sadness, but a combination of symptoms that continues for a period of time and interferes with one's life. Depression can range from mild to severe.

In any given year more than 17 million people suffer from clinical depression. Unlike feeling "down in the dumps" for a few days or grieving over a loss, clinical depression can last from as little as a few weeks to as long as several months or even years and significantly affect daily living.

Depression affects our minds, emotions, moods, social activity, and bodily functioning. Depressed people begin to think the future is hopeless and feel helpless to make positive changes in their predicaments. They worry, can be easily angered, and are sometimes irritable. They may withdraw from others and may feel others do not care about them and they may push away the very people they want to have assisting them.

What are some signs and symptoms of depression?

Individuals with depressions may experience:

- A lack of interest and pleasure in their daily activities
- Significant weight loss or gain
- Lack of energy
- Inability to concentrate
- Insomnia or excessive sleeping
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide

What causes depression?

Depression can be caused by external events such as trauma, grief, stress, difficult relationships, work environments, or situations over which you have no control. But it can also be caused by an internal response to biological factors including a genetic
predisposition to depression. Children, adolescents, adults, and older persons suffer from depression, and they might experience different symptoms.

What treatments may be available for depression?
There are a variety of treatments for depression including individual, couples or family psychotherapy, which are equal to, or better, in effectiveness when compared to medication, and better than medication when long term outcomes are assessed. While medication alone can be quicker to relieve symptoms than psychotherapy, the use of psychotherapy results in a lower relapse rate, teaches coping mechanisms, and does not have physical side effects. Research has also shown that depression improves when individuals improve their sleep habits, nutrition, and physical activity levels.

Psychologists can administer comprehensive assessments to help identify the depth and causes of depression. Psychologists utilize psychotherapy or "talk therapy". They may use hypnosis, family-based therapy, or a behavioral intervention. Some persons experience dramatic improvement in a few sessions; other persons require ongoing treatment.

Psychotherapy helps people identify the factors that contribute to their depression and deal effectively with the psychological, behavioral, interpersonal, and situational contributors. Skilled health and mental health professionals such as licensed psychologists can work with individuals who are depressed to:

- Pinpoint the life problems that contribute to their depression and help them understand which aspects of those problems they may be able to solve or improve. A licensed psychologist can help depressed patients identify options for the future and set realistic goals that enable them to enhance their mental and emotional well-being. Psychotherapy can also assist individuals who have been depressed in the past with identifying how they have successfully dealt with similar feelings.
- Identify negative or distorted thought patterns that contribute to feelings of hopelessness and helplessness that accompany depression.
• Develop skills to relieve suffering and prevent later bouts of depression. Skills may include developing or strengthening social networks, creating new ways to cope with challenges and crafting a personal self-care plan that includes positive lifestyle changes.

For more information, please visit: https://nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Mental-Health-Conditions/Depression

If you or someone you know could benefit from talking to someone about depression and would like the name of a qualified psychologist in your area, please try our Psychologist Locator.