

Topic Research

It is a common misconception that depression is simply a state of sadness, a condition in which someone who is currently residing in has made a choice to not "snap out of" and to continue "moping around". Anxiety is another condition that is highly misunderstood as extreme overthinking about essentially everything, that someone with anxiety is just a sensitive worry-wart. These associations are not only incredibly inaccurate, they are also harmful to those currently experiencing the disorder(s).

The National Institute of Mental Health defines depression as a period of two weeks or longer during which there is either depressed mood or loss of interest or pleasure, and at least four other symptoms that reflect a change in functioning, such as problems with sleep, eating, energy, concentration, and self-image. In 2015, an estimated 16.1 million adults aged 18 or older in the United States had at least one major depressive episode in the past year. This number represented 6.7% of all U.S. adults. On the other hand, anxiety gets to everyone and is a normal part of life, when temporary. For one with an anxiety disorder, however, the anxiety does not go away and can get worse over time, to the point that it interferes with daily activities such as job performance, school work, and relationships. Depression and anxiety are two different disorders, each with its own causes and its own emotional and behavioral symptoms. According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, many people who develop depression have a history of an anxiety disorder earlier in life. There is no evidence one disorder causes the other, but there is clear evidence that many people suffer from both disorders. The potentially debilitating nature of these two conditions is familiar to me, and thus I have a personal interest in exploring this topic.

There are treatments and therapy options to help control and regulate these illnesses ranging from medications to psychotherapies to brain stimulation therapies, but they are all long-term investments that are not guaranteed. Because it is important to acknowledge that there is no immediate and surefire solution for this epidemic, I must also note that troubleshooting is also not the focus of my intent. There are many other existing products meant to indirectly alleviate the symptoms of mental illness that come off as tongue in cheek and tend to generalize (let alone

trivialize) the experiences of people, especially those that come in app form. My goal for this project is to allow those who are not battling mental health themselves to gain an understanding of what the realities are like. There is an enormous stigmatization regarding conversations about mental health, which only increases the pressure of those living with the condition to bury the reception of incredibly necessary help. Social and emotional support from close friends and loved ones is one of the most influential factors in aid and even the perpetuation of the often-times cyclical emotional episodes. I hope that as more myths are dispelled about depression and anxiety, the more empathic people will become, and the more likely that mental illness will no longer be a topic for the shadows and we as a society will be better able to stand up together to face it.

Sources:

"How to Cope with and Help a Loved One Experiencing Anxiety and Depression." *ADAVIC Anxiety Disorders Association of Victoria, Inc. N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Feb. 2017.*

National Institutes of Health. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d. Web. 09 Feb. 2017.

"Understand the Facts." *Anxiety and Depression Association of America, ADAA.* N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Feb. 2017.