

DEPRESSION

What is depression?

The word depression is spoken of everywhere, by many and a lot of the times completely misused.

Commonly sadness or even grief is considered the primary emotion related to depression but let me tell you something - Depression or Sadness or grief are very different things! Using depression as an interchangeable word for other emotions that we might be feeling during a particular time of our lives is something that we should be more conscious about.

So what is the difference? Well, sadness is largely triggered by a hurtful, disappointing or difficult situation or event. When something like the environment or ourselves changes to either adjust or get over the disappointment or hurt the sadness dissolves or lessens. This allows other emotions to come in and helps us to balance and become our normal self again.

The same thing with grief. Grief is mainly the emotion felt after losing loved ones. Both grief and depression may consist of withdrawal from usual activities. But we understand that intense feeling is more than sadness but less than that of depression.

But when this sadness is prolonged and constant and other aspects are present then the word Depression comes in.

Depression is a mood disorder. It does not necessarily require a difficult situation, a loss, a particular event or even a change of circumstance as a trigger. Depression is when the person feels sad or hopeless about everything. The person loses the ability to experience joy or pleasure, he may have all the reasons to be happy or satisfied but the ability is not there to do so. A person with depression struggles with completing their daily needs, keeping up with their hygiene, not wanting to do or being interested in anything, and some may even struggle to get out of the bed.

Depression across various population

Depression in children. Recent studies have found that infants as early as 8 months of age also do get depressed, surprising, right? Depression is striking increasingly in younger people, as opposed to our awareness. Older children have anger fits while the younger children have unexplained crying spells for a certain amount of time. A common symptom of depression in children is an irritable mood. Emotional incompetence, irregular conduct, frequent and intense temper tantrums, self-doubt, and despair are common amongst all age groups of children. Self-harm or verbalization of any suicidal ideation by a child should not be overlooked. School performance also can speak volumes about the depressive symptoms. Difficulty in concentrating is also quite common. Violent content exposure, bullying, gaming, broken families, parents with

different styles of parenting, sexual or verbal abuse are also some factors that can trigger depression in a child.

Depression in Adults. I would like to separate women and men here as depression plays a very different role with both. So let's talk about **depression in women** first. Did you know that depression is nearly twice as common among women as men? Well, it is true! Women are more likely to experience atypical depression. Instead of sleeping less, eating less, and losing weight, they experience the opposite which is sleeping excessively, eating more and gaining weight.

Women are more suppressive than men and so depression also generally stays hidden due to this aspect. Women are known or expected to suppress emotions or not show anger leads to depression which is not visible. Women are also associated with having more guilt and low self worth as they criticize themselves for faults and mistakes.

Aside from having emotional aspects affecting the mindset of women, there are so many physical and hormonal aspects also that affect the women overall. There are so many physical changes and challenges that women's bodies might have to go through in her life such as menstruation, PCOS/PCOD, childbirth, fertility issues, miscarriages, menopause – all or any one of these factors can worsen the psychological health of women.

Surprisingly, depression is far more common in older people than it is in the general population. Depression finds its way in a person's life due to other medical illnesses, disabilities, and ends up lasting longer. Also, did you know, the suicide rate in people aged from 80 to 84 is more than twice that of the general population.

Sadly, a lot of times depression is underdiagnosed or misdiagnosed in the **elderly population**. This may be because the symptoms of depression are usually paired up with physical complaints. This causes a delay in treatment or mistreatment altogether.

The older generation is expected to slow down and that causes anyone to miss the early signs of depression and they end up struggling more with depression. Aside from terminal physical illnesses or disabilities, loneliness, and isolation, traumatic life events such as losing a partner or other loved ones, no or reduced a sense of purpose, and fear of death are some other aspects that cause depression in the older generation.

Understanding depression through the eyes of different ages and gender really helps understand where and how depression might have entered an individual's life. This can also help open eyes that depression is not always only emotionally driven, there could be other factors that push a person towards depression.

Regardless of who is dealing with depression, we have to be supportive, patient, and non-judgemental towards the person who is diagnosed.

Techniques to cope with depression

These techniques may help you cope with negative emotions through the periods of depression.

1. Mandala Colouring/Drawing

Drawing or Colouring mandala actually helps to curb your anxiety. Mandala Art Therapy can give you strength, happiness, and a sense of completeness. It helps to improve the vibes to positivity and to focus for a long task at hand.

2. Gratitude Journaling

Whenever you feel low or negative, it is certainly difficult to think of anything else that is positive. However, this simple technique can help bring to light some good parts of the day that make us think and feel positive. This is a small step in recognizing the positives.

All you have to do is write down the things that you are thankful about or the most positive thing that happened throughout your day/week. This simple act of writing down positives can inculcate new associations for our brain to help us see more positives even though we are in a negative mood.

3. Punch the Pillow

Suppressed anger is as toxic as anger outburst for mental health. So, expressing your anger is important. If you feel expressing your anger is difficult in healthier ways, you can try punching a pillow instead.

4. Positive thinking & affirmations

Affirmations are written in present tense and are realistic with positively framed statements that when practiced consistently rewire our thoughts & beliefs. Repeating affirmations after you've woken up and before going to bed, is the best time to make oneself feel positive throughout the day. Example: I am beautiful. I have the power to create the life that I desire. I can conquer anything.

5. Reframing negative situations

How a situation turns out is dependent on how you view it. The situation you are in doesn't determine the outcome, the way you perceive things, does. Change words that you use in phrases. There is always a choice present, but if you keep on looking at the frame on the wall from the same angle always, you won't be able to find anything new in it. So, instead of saying, "I can't do anything well" to helpful thoughts of "I can do some things pretty well" or instead of "I can't make a difference in what happens in my life", say "When I put my mind to it, I can change my situation."

6. Strengths

Beginning your day with writing down your strengths helps us to maintain a positive attitude amidst a dull or sad day. Doing it everyday is proved to be a great technique for elevating your mood. If one is going through a low mood, I suggest you fake it till you make it. Because, once you start acknowledging your strengths, they help you to keep yourself more motivated and on track.

7. Mirror mirror on the wall!

Positively talking to yourself everyday actually rewires our brain in a positive manner. Feeding yourself with hope, love, and positive thoughts boosts our cognitive and emotional abilities. You can simply begin by standing in front of a mirror and feeding affirmations. You can become more empathetic and more lenient towards yourself. It also helps you to come out of self-doubt or guilt.

How to support someone experiencing depression

Let's start with how can you support someone at your workplace:

1. Allow a flexible schedule.

For many companies, a normal work schedule implies being in the office from nine to five. However, an employee struggling from depression may come to you and ask to come into the office later in the day as sleep problems are common in depression. Helping an employee with a work schedule is therefore a reasonable accommodation and is supported by research.

2. Break the task

As a manager, you can help by breaking up large projects into smaller tasks. The benefit of giving smaller, more manageable tasks, is that it empowers employees to achieve more frequent experiences of success and it also becomes easy for them to tackle it.

3. Reach out

Depression often compels people to isolate themselves. It is necessary to reach out to your co-workers who might need help. This simple effort of yours might become a huge thing for them and will help them to deal with their depression.

If you need help or support from people at your workplace, then even you can reach out to them. People often fear that if they ask for any help they will be seen as incompetent. However, you want to make certain people at work, to be aware about your situation and the severity of your symptoms, reach out to them. For example, if you're working on a particularly difficult project that is causing you to feel anxious or depressed, you might want to let your manager know you need help so that he/she can delegate some of the responsibilities to your co-workers. You might say, "I want to deliver excellent results, but I'm feeling overwhelmed. It would be very helpful if

I could work on this project with a few more people. Who on our team do you think could be a good fit?”

Support your loved ones:

Depression can make it difficult to maintain supportive and fulfilling relationships.

1. Educate yourself.

A great way to support your loved one is to **educate yourself and learn** everything you need to know about depression, including its causes, symptoms, and treatments.

2. Maintain boundaries.

When supporting your loved ones, it is very easy to drain yourself both emotionally and physically without even realizing. Do not neglect yourself in the process of helping others because you might eventually become inadequate for them and yourself too. Thus, **establishing healthy boundaries** may help.

3. Self-care and Self-Compassion.

Consider **self-care** and also **seek compassion and support from other people**. Remember, self-care is not selfish. In fact, you or your loved one could be better off if you carve out time to safeguard your mind, body, and spirit with habits like: eating healthy, regular exercising, sound sleep, practice yoga or meditation, stay socially connected, and participate in activities or hobbies that you enjoy.

4. Do not give up.

Supporting a person with depression may get frustrating and you may feel powerless. When you reach your limits, **do not give up on them**, don't walk away even if it feels like it is the only option remaining. There is no quick fix for depression. The recovery process takes time. Thus, **being patient** is the key. At least try to talk to your loved ones and tell them how you feel. Rather than losing or giving up on your relationship, you can try various other options to help them which you might have never tried before.

5. Verbalize your support.

One of the most important things you can do for someone who is depressed is simply to be there for them and **verbalize your support**. Hold them close or just listen while they share their feelings. Offer to help them with making appointments. Let them know that you are there for them in whatever way they need while they make their recovery.

6. Do not take it personally

Depression can make people behave in ways that they normally would not do when they are feeling well. They may become angry, irritable, or withdrawn. They may not be interested in activities which they previously enjoyed like going out or doing activities together. Your spouse or significant other may lose interest in sex. Do not take **these things personally** and assume that your partner has stopped thinking about you or that he/she no longer cares for you. Try to understand that their behavior or thinking pattern is the symptom of illness which requires treatment.

7. Help out around the house.

Just like when a person has any other illness, they may simply not feel well enough to take care of paying the bills or cleaning the house. And, just like with any other illness, willingly offer to take over some of their daily chores until they feel well enough to do them again.