

Major Depressive and Bipolar Disorders

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WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial will cover the topic of mood disorders. Our discussion breaks down as follows:

1. Mood Disorders
 - 1a. Depression and Mania
 - 1b. Bipolar Disorders
2. Types of Bipolar Disorders
 - 2a. Bipolar I Disorder
 - 2b. Bipolar II Disorder
 - 2c. Cyclothymic Disorder
3. Depressive Disorders
4. Types of Depressive Disorders
 - 4a. Major Depressive Disorder
 - 4b. Dysthymic Disorder
5. Treatment of Depressive Disorders
6. Situational Depressive Disorders
7. Endogenous Depression
8. Postpartum Depression
9. Seasonal Affective Disorder
10. Treatments for Situational Depressive Disorders

1. Mood Disorders

Mood disorders are any psychological disorders that are marked by a major change in a person's mood or emotions. The person, in other words, either feels very good or very bad about themselves. Mood disorders are a bit different from thought disorders or psychotic disorders, for instance.



TERM TO KNOW

Mood Disorders

Psychological disorders marked by major changes in mood or emotion.

1a. Depression and Mania

Now, mood disorders can either come in two forms. They can either be a low affect or a high affect, which is to say that the person affected can have very low emotions or feel down—depressed, in other words—or they can have very high emotions and feel very up, displaying mania.

Now, both of these—either feeling very low or very high—can affect a person's thoughts and behaviors as a result of their moods.

⇒ **EXAMPLE** For example, when a person is depressed, this can lead to certain periods of inactivity where the person isn't doing much, and also possibly suicidal feelings. Mania, on the other hand, can lead to an increased amount of activity or energy; in extreme levels, it can actually lead to psychotic symptoms like hallucinations or delusions. Therefore, a person that is very manic might feel invincible, so they might attempt to do very dangerous things.

1b. Bipolar Disorders

Now, besides existing in one or the other of the two emotional states, depressed or manic, a person can also switch between both extremes. This was formerly called manic depression, because it was a combination of the two states, but today we call it **bipolar disorders**.



DID YOU KNOW

The term “bipolar” comes from “bi-,” meaning “two,” and “poles,” referring to the two extremes. People with bipolar disorders move between the two extremes in different cycles. These cycles generally occur less than once a year, for three to six months in length. Many times when we think of a person who is bipolar, we think of somebody who quickly switches between moods, but this isn't actually the case with most people with bipolar disorder.

Now, outside of this normal cycling of once a year or less than once a year, a person can also be rapid cycling, meaning the cycles can occur four or more times a year. They can also have different changes in mood that occur a bit more frequently than three to six months in length.

A person can even be ultra-rapid cycling, which is to say that changes occur over the course of a few days, or at the very extreme, a person could be ultradian, meaning they experience severe mood changes within a day itself. However, this is much more uncommon.



TERM TO KNOW

Bipolar Disorders

Mood disorders where a person switches between extremes of mania and possibly depression.

2. Types of Bipolar Disorders

There are several different types of bipolar disorder. We will discuss them in order of severity, but take this ordering with a grain of salt, because while some might display more severe or extreme symptoms, all three of these are serious enough to cause harm in a person's life. Therefore, all three of them should be considered to be important.

2a. Bipolar I Disorder

The first type to discuss is **bipolar I disorder**, which refers to a person who has been diagnosed as having at least one manic episode within the span of their life. Even if you've only had one manic episode, you could still be diagnosed with bipolar I.

Generally, though, it's not just one episode of mania. Usually, it occurs multiple times over a person's life. It also has to occur in the absence of anything that might cause it, such as drugs or medication. There shouldn't be any biological component that is specifically causing an episode from outside of the body.

Now, this may seem like a simplistic guideline, but bipolar I disorder is an extremely severe form of bipolar disorder. It can impair a person's life to a significant degree, because remember, mania involves a significant loss of control, where someone can even go so far as to experience hallucinations or delusions.

Depressive episodes are not needed to be diagnosed with bipolar I. However, many people do experience depression along with their mania; it's simply not one of the criteria for this particular diagnosis.



TERM TO KNOW

Bipolar I Disorder

A person diagnosed that has had at least one manic episode, in the absence of anything that might cause it, like medication or drugs.

2b. Bipolar II Disorder

The second type is **Bipolar II disorder**, which includes the appearance of both depression—therefore, depression is a requirement for bipolar II—as well as hypomania, which is a less severe type of mania. With hypomania, the symptoms that are being displayed are not quite as extreme as full-blown mania. Therefore, the person experiences manic symptoms like loss of sleep, a flight of ideas, rapid speech, being easily distracted, and feelings of grandiosity. However, the person doesn't experience the more extreme components, like hallucinations or delusions or any behavior that requires actual hospitalization.

In addition, a person with hypomania will often display strong pleasure-seeking behaviors, especially sexual pleasure-seeking behaviors. You can see how this could be severe and have real consequences on a person's life.

A person suffering from bipolar II disorder might initially evade detection because their behavior is seen as being exaggerated or flamboyant, so the person might simply seem to very be excited and a bit strange. However, it's important to note that just because this person seems like an extreme or strange or eccentric type of person, this disorder can seriously impair their social lives, as well as their personal lives. It can place the person into situations that are physically dangerous as well. Therefore it is important to note these things and to help a person that's experiencing hypomania to seek treatment.



WATCH

WNBA All-Star and Olympic gold medalist Chamique Holdsclaw was a basketball powerhouse. But away from the game, she struggled privately with crippling depression. Though her sport provided some relief from her mental health, not even the basketball court could offer an escape when she lost a beloved family member. In the following video, hear how Chamique rebounded from her biggest off-court challenge yet to become a champion for mental health awareness!



TERM TO KNOW

Bipolar II Disorder

A form of bipolar disorder that includes the appearance of both depression and hypomania.

2c. Cyclothymic Disorder

Finally, there is **cyclothymic disorder**, which is a form of bipolar where a person experiences longer periods of symptoms of hypomania or depression—generally, at least two months in length, but oftentimes longer. In addition, they may also—but not always—experience milder symptoms of these disorders. This disorder is sometimes mistaken for a person's actual personality versus a disorder. Others may assume that the person is simply a depressed or low energy person by their nature, because the symptoms occur in long periods of time.

However, this can still lead to very serious issues for that person. Symptoms are not always mild, and it can often lead to cycles of being very excited or very depressed which can lead to dangerous behaviors again.

Bipolar disorder in general, including all three types, can be treated with drugs like lithium for manic episodes, or antidepressants for depressive episodes. In addition, psychotherapy can be utilized to help a person cope with the mood episodes that they might be experiencing, to help them better understand and recognize them, so they can better cope with them on a personal level. Generally, it's best to combine both drugs and psychotherapy to receive the most effective therapy.



TERM TO KNOW

Cyclothymic Disorder

A form of bipolar, where a person experiences longer periods (at least 2 months) of hypomania and depression that are generally, but not always, milder.

3. Depressive Disorders

A depressive disorder is any mood disorder that occurs in the absence of manic episodes. A person may display long periods of symptoms like reduced activity, lack of enjoyment in other activities, and feelings of loneliness and hopelessness.

Depression is one of the most common psychological disorders. Over 19 million people experience depression in some form. Depression often occurs with other psychological disorders, and can also be a symptom of another disorder.

⇒ **EXAMPLE** For instance, depression can be a symptom of anxiety disorders or schizophrenia. On the other hand, it can also be a natural reaction to a negative or stressful life event.

Depression differs from simply feeling very sad or down because it occurs for long periods of time. This can range from weeks all the way up to multiple years of feeling the specific kind of depression.

It's important to note that depression isn't necessarily sadness; often these words are used synonymously, but depression is more akin to feeling a lack of something, like feelings of hopelessness and a lack of joy or happiness. In other words, it's a bit more like emptiness or a lack of emotion. Sadness, on the other hand, is an expression of an emotion that you're actually feeling.

Depression can often affect a person's behavior. If a person is depressed, they can have trouble sleeping or eating. They can also display poor performance at work or at school.

4. Types of Depressive Disorders

There are two major types of depressive disorders:

- Major depressive disorder
- Dysthymic disorder

4a. Major Depressive Disorder

Major depressive disorder is a pure depressive disorder, in a sense. A person experiences depression for a period of at least two weeks in length. It is also considered “pure” because it is not caused by any substances, bereavement, or other psychological disorders.

Persons with major depressive disorder often have recurring thoughts of death and of suicide. This can be an incredibly dangerous disorder in terms of the behavioral component of it and the effect that it can have. In fact, 60% of people that commit suicide are depressed in some form.



TERM TO KNOW

Major Depressive Disorder

A depressive disorder in which a person experiences depression for at least two weeks.

4b. Dysthymic Disorder

Dysthymic disorder is a form of depression that isn't necessarily as severe as major depressive disorder. The symptoms that a person with dysthymic disorder displays aren't quite as extreme or as problematic for the person, although it is still a problem and can impair their functions.

In dysthymic disorder, the symptoms occur for an even longer period of time. The feelings are present most of the time and occur for at least two years in length. Because of this length, it can lead to some very severe problems in a person's life where they withdraw and they don't have social support from other people. They may constantly have feelings of worthlessness or loneliness. While the symptoms may not be as severe and

may not require hospitalization due to suicidal thoughts, this disorder still has a major effect on a person's life because of they are symptomatic for that longer period of time.



TERM TO KNOW

Dysthymic Disorder

A form of depression that isn't as severe as major depressive disorder and that lasts for a longer period of time (for the majority of the time for at least two years).

5. Treatment of Depressive Disorders

Treatment for depressive disorders can vary widely. There are a lot of different treatment types that people will experiment with, especially considering the prevalence of this disorder. The two major forms of treatment are drugs and psychotherapy.

Drugs are a well-known treatment for depression. Antidepressants like Prozac or Zoloft have entered common speech. In general, antidepressant drugs have gotten a lot better and have fewer side effects. Drugs known as selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors (SSRIs) are a newer type of drug with less serious side effects than options like monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs) or tricyclic antidepressants, which were classically being used.

Psychotherapy on its own has proven to be very effective in the treatment of disorders like dysthymic disorder. It's even more effective with major depressive disorder and other types of depressive disorders when used in conjunction with medication—using drugs and psychotherapy in tandem produces the best outcome for patients with these types of disorders.

6. Situational Depressive Disorders

There are several depressive disorders known as situational depressive disorders. These are a type of mood disorder that usually involves an environmental factor and a biological one. In other words, they have both nature and nurture causes. These disorders will exhibit the same symptoms of depression, like lack of hope or joy, lack of activity, and changes in sleeping patterns. In addition, they last for an extended length of time.

7. Endogenous Depression

Endogenous depression is a form of depression linked to our genes and the brain's neurotransmitter production, including serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine. Certain genetic factors can hinder the development of these neurotransmitters, potentially leading to lifelong depression.

While individuals may carry the genetic predisposition for this disorder from birth, it doesn't mean they will inevitably develop it. The onset of endogenous depression isn't solely due to traumatic or stressful

experiences. It can occur without any apparent external cause, which is a key characteristic of this disorder.



TERM TO KNOW

Endogenous Depression

A form of depression with a specific genetic component related to the brain's production of neurotransmitters.

8. Postpartum Depression

Another situational dependent depressive disorder is postpartum depression, which is a depression that develops in a woman after giving birth. It only occurs in about 10% of women. This depression can be very severe, with extreme cases resulting in psychosis.

This disorder is caused by the interaction of nature and nurture as well. The environmental cause is the pregnancy, but there are certain changes in the hormonal levels of these women who have a very specific sensitivity to these hormones. Not every woman who has a baby will develop this disorder; however, certain people are biologically predisposed to develop it.



TERM TO KNOW

Postpartum Depression

Depression that develops in a woman after giving birth.

9. Seasonal Affective Disorder

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is one of the more common types of depression. It's a type of depression where a person experiences mood changes along with the changes in the seasons. This is not a unique disorder within the DSM-IV; rather, it is a symptom of major depressive disorder. Seasonal affective disorder is used to diagnose another type of disorder, but it hasn't necessarily been defined as a mental disorder in its own right.

Outside of the DSM and in the wider medical community, though, it is definitely gaining a lot more ground and recognition. Seasonal affective disorder has a definite evolutionary and biological component to it. People have developed this disorder because, over time and through evolution, they have developed changes in their activities and behaviors during certain parts of the year.

During the winter, a person is a lot less active because it's colder outside, so they tend to do less. There is also definitely a biological component. There is a specific part of the brain, in the hypothalamus, that is light-sensitive, which can actually help in developing treatments for the disorder.



TERM TO KNOW

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

A type of depression where a person experiences mood changes along with changes in the seasons, particularly during autumn and winter.

10. Treatments for Situational Depressive Disorders

When we talk about treatment, we're also talking about prevention. For those people that might be predisposed to these disorders, treatment involves helping to prevent them from developing depression at all. Each disorder can be treated preventatively:

- For those predisposed towards endogenous depression, prevention may include helping people reduce stress in their lives.
- Postpartum depression has been particularly linked with weak social support. Prevention can include ensuring that a woman has the support of friends and family.
- Since seasonal affective disorder has a physical cause, physical treatments like light treatment—where a person is exposed to more bright lights—are being tried.



SUMMARY

Mood disorders are any psychological disorders marked by major changes in mood, either low or high feelings. **Bipolar disorders** are a specific type of mood disorder, where a person switches between extremes of mania and depression. Most people with bipolar disorders move between the two extremes in cycles that generally occur less than once a year, for three to six months in length, but in rare cases, these cycles can be much more frequent.

Depressive disorders are any mood disorder that occurs in the absence of manic episodes. It is one of the most common types of psychological disorders and is characterized by a person displaying long periods of symptoms like reduced activity, lack of enjoyment in other activities, and feelings of loneliness and hopelessness.

There are several depressive disorders known as **situational depressive disorders**, which are a type of mood disorder that usually involves an environmental factor and a biological one (nature and nurture).

Endogenous depression is a disorder that a person is born with, that is triggered by environmental factors like traumatic or stressful events. **Postpartum depression** is another disorder that has both biological and environmental factors. A woman can develop a sensitivity to the hormones that follow pregnancy, causing depression. **Seasonal affective disorder** is a disorder in which people experience depression along with the changes in season. One way of **treating situational depressive disorders** is to enact preventative measures in those predisposed to these disorders.

Good luck!

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TERMS TO KNOW

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A form of bipolar disorder that includes the appearance of both depression and hypomania.

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A form of bipolar, where a person experiences longer periods (at least 2 months) of hypomania and depression that are generally, but not always, milder.

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A form of depression that isn't as severe as major depressive disorder and that lasts for a longer period of time (for the majority of the time for at least two years).

Endogenous Depression

A form of depression with a specific genetic component related to the brain's production of neurotransmitters.

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