



Depression

■ by Michael Geraci, MA, Licensed Professional Counselor

I'm sure you've heard a friend or family member proclaim, "Gosh, I'm so DEPRESSED!" It seems recently, "depression" has become a term that can be thrown around pretty loosely and somewhat irreverently. Depression is much more significant than just "having a bad day" or being momentarily upset about something that's outside of our control.

Major Depressive Disorder, the official term for clinical depression, is a mood disorder that makes one feel exhausted, worthless, helpless, and hopeless, and it can last for weeks, months, or even longer if left untreated. Other significant symptoms of depression include a lack of energy, sleep problems, taking little or no pleasure in things that one used to enjoy, and when most severe, suicidal thoughts and ideations.

In men, depression can be masked by perpetual irritability and anger. In children, depression can come across as a constant bad attitude or self-critical thinking (i.e. "I'm not good at anything.") Adults who are severely depressed describe it as "being in a fog" where they feel completely unmotivated. Getting out of bed is a chore, getting dressed seems overwhelming, and even eating can seem like an obstacle.

While such symptoms can be arduous, there is hope. Depression is treatable. If you are depressed, do NOT wait to get help or think it will go away on its own. Getting a medical checkup is recommended, as a doctor can check for any health conditions, such as hypothyroidism or mono which can cause similar symptoms. Next, finding a counselor who can support and help you through such a difficult time is key.

Clinical depression is a very real condition that can have debilitating emotional and physical effects.

A therapist can help you:

- Understand your emotions and put feelings into words.
- Identify and overcome negative thinking patterns that contribute to depression.
- Develop a broader outlook on life, increase self-esteem, and become more accepting of yourself and others.

In addition to talk therapy, medication may be necessary depending on the severity and longevity of the depression, and behavioral interventions such as exercising more regularly, incorporating relaxation techniques to help with sleep, and addressing diet and nutrition may all be in order. ■



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Michael has helped many clients overcome depression.

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