

Depression – What’s Going On?



Everybody feels somewhat down every now and then. It’s no big deal. In fact, if we didn’t have the “blah’s” every once in a while, we probably wouldn’t enjoy the up times! But what about the times we just don’t feel right for a long time, say for at least two weeks straight? Is that normal? Shouldn’t we be able to “just snap out of it” like everyone tells us to do?

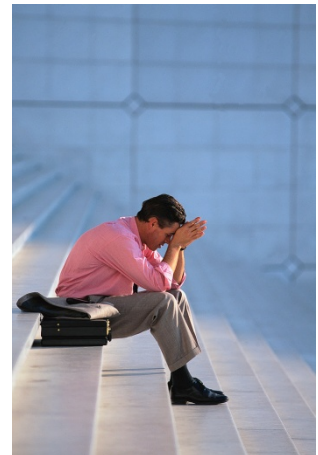
Depression is one of the most common mental health problems in the world. In fact, it is said that 17 million people are dealing with depression in the United States. Depression can be best understood as a cluster of symptoms that may come from different causes. Some people go through some events in their lives that cause a temporary depression that is mild in nature and usually doesn’t last more than 6 months. Dysthymia is a long-term depression that doesn’t quite meet the criteria for Major Depressive Disorder that lasts over two years. Bi-Polar Disorder or Manic/Depressive Disorder is a psychiatric disorder where the brain goes on overload for a while such as rapid speech, lack of sleep and run away thoughts. Then there is a period of depression that follows until the cycle begins again. Major Depressive Disorder lasts for a at least two weeks and can last for months or years without help.

Why Do I Feel So Bad?

Depression affects everyone in different ways. There are some similarities though. Although it takes a trained and licensed mental health professional almost all people with Major Depressive Disorder display a marked change in mood, a deep feeling of sadness, and a noticeable loss of interest or pleasure in favorite activities. These symptoms persist for at least two weeks, almost every day, most of the day. Other symptoms include:

- depressed mood
- loss of interest or pleasure in things
- decrease or increase in appetite
- insomnia or hypersomnia
- psychomotor agitation
- fatigue or loss of energy
- feelings of worthlessness or inappropriate guilt
- inability to think, concentrate or memory
- recurrent thoughts of death, suicidal or homicidal thoughts.

Depression affects you spiritually, emotionally and physically as you can see from the list above. You feel bad because there is some negative self-talk going on as well as a reduction of chemicals in your brain that allow you to process stuff effectively.



When Do I Need Help?

You may want to talk with a friend if you do not begin to feel better after a few days of feeling down. If you still feel down after a week, you may want to talk to a pastor or someone else with lay counseling training and experience. If you do not feel better after a couple of weeks of feeling depressed you may want to see a licensed mental health professional. And of course, if

there are any thoughts, intent or plan to hurt yourself or another person, get help immediately by calling 911. Remember, after a few weeks existing with the above mentioned symptoms, things will probably continue to be pretty bleak and you will most likely need professional help in order to begin to feel better faster.

Do I Need Medication?



In some cases, depression is effectively treated with talking to a friend, clergy, or counselor. Other times, changing behavior like exercise and eating correctly will help. But with some cases of depression, especially when there are thoughts of hurting yourself or others is present, medication can be helpful. Sometimes, a combination of all three approaches are the best for a speedy recovery. If you or a loved one are feeling depressed, the best thing you can do is to talk to someone who knows what to do. You may need to call your medical doctor, R. Michael Lowery, LMHC at (239) 220-9912 or your Employee Assistance Program. Remember, if there persistent thoughts of harm to self or others, call 911 now.