

Mental Health Depression

Mental health is really about how we think and feel about ourselves and the world around us, and about how we behave and interact with others in our day to day lives. It isn't easy to define exactly what it means to have good mental health as people will interpret what it means to be mentally healthy in different ways. On the other hand, there are some signs and symptoms that can indicate when someone has a mental health problem, when their mental functions are not performing as well as they could, and we see evidence of alternations in their thinking and behaviour.

Take depression for example, even though there is no set pattern and each person will be affected differently; there are some simple clues that we can look out for.

What it means to be depressed

Depression is a lot more than feeling a bit fed up and down in the dumps, which is something we all experience from time to time and is a natural part of the ups and downs of life. To be clinically depressed means that we cannot just shake off our low mood and get on with our lives, the depression persists and starts to interfere with our normal daily routines and we can no longer enjoy activities and pastimes that used to be pleasurable.

We may find it hard to get up in the morning to go to work or school, and we may have difficulty getting to sleep at night and when we do get to sleep, our sleep might be disturbed Our relationships with family, friends and work colleagues can suffer and our self esteem may be low and we don't feel good enough

We could find ourselves worrying constantly and feeling anxious and panicky for no particular reason. Our eating patterns can change and we could see fluctuations in our weight as we may eat a lot more or lose our appetite

Maybe we are tearful and cry a lot, or we may find we cannot get in touch with our emotions and feel numb and unable to express our emotion. Some of us may become more aggressive and hostile or irritable for no real reason. Life may seem too difficult and so we struggle to cope with

even minor tasks .We may feel guilty and worthy of blame and punishment. Our memory and concentration might not be as good as it was and we find it more and more difficult to make decisions

Other physical symptoms such as headaches, and various other aches and pains may convince us that we have something else wrong with us.

Regardless of the different ways that some of these symptoms can affect us, the main factors that point to depression are the same. Major depression is likely to be diagnosed if the symptoms of depression have persisted for more than two weeks accompanied by low moods and a lack of pleasure in pursuits that were once enjoyed and the symptoms are severe enough to interfere with normal daily routines and activities.

Who gets depressed?

No one knows why some people become depressed and not others and there is no single known cause of depression either. Depressive episodes can be triggered by biochemical, genetic, psychological,

Environmental and social factors or a combination of these. What is known is that certain groups of people appear more at risk of developing depression than others. These include the long term sick and disabled, those in poor living conditions, those with a history of depression in the family, the homeless, ethnic minorities and people in prison. Sometimes life circumstances can trigger an episode of depression such as redundancy, retirement, divorce, bereavement, problems at work or financial difficulties.

However, no one is immune to depression and someone can develop a depressive disorder even if they are not considered at greater risk. The reality is that any kind of mental health problem and depression can strike any one of us at any time of our lives.

Getting well again

One of the biggest barriers to recovery for someone suffering from depression or indeed any mental health problem is a reluctance to seek help. Many people are afraid of admitting that they cannot cope and so try and deal with it on their own but the symptoms are unlikely to just disappear and will continue ,Possibly for years without appropriate help and treatment.

Any kind of mental health problem can be an intensely isolating experience as the individual concerned cannot help how they are feeling so the understanding and support of family and friends can be of enormous help for someone struggling to cope with their depression. However, the most important thing to remember is that depression is treatable and it is also fairly common.

Your doctor is the best person to advise you on what treatment options are available as he or she will be able to make full medical assessment in order to obtain a correct diagnosis and can take into account any other contributory factors that might need dealt with. Usually, treatment will consist of medication and perhaps some form of talking therapy or a combination of both.

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