

Banishing the Blues

What You Can Do About Depression

Everyone goes through periods of "the blues." But when it goes on for a long time or has side effects that make even small things difficult to accomplish, you may be suffering from depression. Understanding the causes and signs of depression can help you or someone you care for seek appropriate treatment. Depression can be devastating, but help is available.

Understand the Causes

Depression can be caused by overwhelming losses such as the death of a friend, severe illness or divorce. Some people have difficulty facing the sadness, anger, shame or remorse that can go along with such an event. They become depressed as their feelings numb.

People who feel powerless over a situation often feel depressed. For example, those with very high standards may feel especially bad when they try hard, yet fail to meet their goals. If someone dies, they may be certain they could have prevented it. If they're fired from a job, they may blame themselves again and again, rather than let go of their disappointments.

Loneliness and lack of affection can cause depression. Turning anger inside, which is more common for women than for men, is another cause. Expressing anger in a healthy way can help relieve it. Physical conditions such as hidden food allergies, poor diet or low blood sugar can also cause depression.

Recognize the Signs

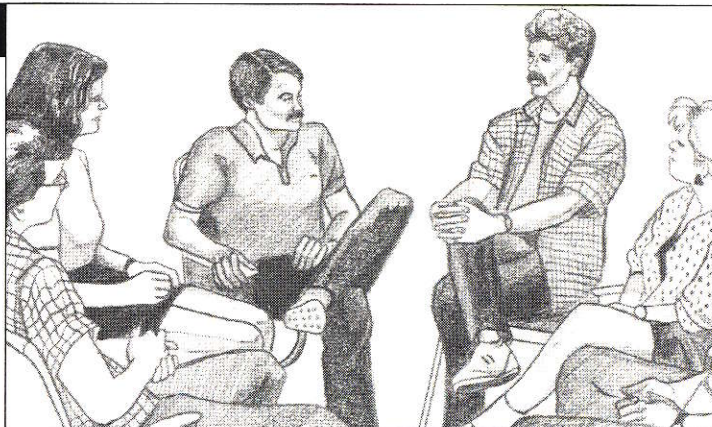
Someone who is depressed may show signs such as:

- loss of interest in home and work.
- frequent crying.
- change in eating habits: eating too much or too little.
- unexplained nervousness or grouchiness.
- poor self-image.
- lack of energy for regular activities.
- change in sleep patterns.

Treatment Can Help

When someone is depressed, life loses its sparkle and meaning. Spending time with a special friend can help. But sometimes, the depression hangs on stubbornly for weeks or months. If you or someone close to you is experiencing this kind of depression, seek professional counseling. Depending on the severity of the condition, treatment may include:

- professional counseling.
- aerobic exercise, such as running or swimming.
- practicing positive self-talk.
- scheduling activities throughout the day.
- vitamin B6, folic acid and/or niacin supplements.
- medication.



Treatment for depression can range from professional counseling to something as simple as aerobic exercise.

