

DEPRESSION

It is common and even healthy to feel sad or blue at times, these feelings can be informative. Feeling down can tell us that we are bothered by something, stressed and need to slow down. Feeling depleted can indicate that particular issues burden us. These feelings can be a guide, telling us to take time and tend to our needs.

While many of these same feelings occur with clinical depression the difference is in the intensity and duration of these experiences. Sadness or a sense of loss tends to linger, isolation sets in and resilience seems to be lost. When clinically depressed individuals fall they tend to stay down. They are often critical and blame themselves for their feelings. They become easily overwhelmed, easily exhausted, experience hopelessness, and withdraw socially. Some may have thoughts of death or suicide.

The good news is that clinical depression is highly amenable to treatment when receiving competent care. When issues are not addressed and feelings not expressed symptoms can worsen, creating an unnecessary burden on oneself, family, and friends. Left untreated, major depression can last six to 12 months with 40 percent of individuals still having symptoms sufficient to meet the diagnosis after one year.

There is no single cause of depression that has been identified. Most practicing clinicians understand the cause to be biopsychosocial in nature and approach treatment in this manner. Paying attention to your family history, body chemistry, personality characteristics, mental and emotional functioning, and social and environmental influences can help one discover the cause of their own personal struggle with depression. Any approach focusing only on one of these factors is likely too simplistic and therefore not beneficial as a treatment.

Many people who experience depression and seek help through their family physician will find that there are a variety of medications available. Medication for many is an appropriate route and helpful in many cases, and for others it's neither appropriate nor helpful.

Research indicates that a combination of psychological counselling and medication is typically the preferred choice for clinical depression. Counselling alone can be considered the second treatment of choice, especially in non-clinical cases, and medication alone the third choice. There is an abundance of studies indicating that psychological interventions are as, or more effective than medication for the treatment of depression. By conducting an assessment, a licensed psychologist can help to make recommendations for an effective treatment.

The psychological counselling process can help individuals improve overall mental and emotional well-being. Clients and therapists work together to locate

personal issues and life stressors that contribute to depression, as well as identify thinking patterns, behaviours, and emotional awareness. Counselling helps one learn about his or her own personal experience with depression and the changes that can be made to help prevent future episodes.

If you are experiencing symptoms of depression or any psychological difficulties it is important to address your concerns and consult with a licensed psychologist.

Depression Facts

- In North America, depression is the leading cause of disease burden, and the World Health Organization predicts that in the year 2030 it will be the second leading cause of disease burden worldwide after HIV.
 - Approximately 5% of Canadian men and 10% of Canadian women experience symptoms of depression at some point in their life.
 - While depression can be effectively treated in the community, many people delay seeking assistance due to stigma, lack of knowledge, or resources.
 - Research from the American Journal of Cardiology indicates that individuals with depression and anxiety have a 50% increased risk for cardiovascular illness and death.
 - Research from the University of Florida found that a perfectionistic personality characteristic with self-criticism is strongly associated with depression.
 - Having one episode of major depression increases your risk of having another, but working with a psychologist can reduce the risk of future episodes or the intensity.
 - The risk of major depression is increased with conditions such as Parkinson's disease, stroke, multiple sclerosis, and during the first year after childbirth. High levels of depression are also common enough those with economic difficulties.
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