

DEPRESSION

What is Depression?

Depression is REAL. It is more than being sad, as sadness is a normal reaction to difficult times in life. Usually, the sadness goes away with a little time. Depression is different—it is a mood disorder that may cause severe symptoms that can affect how you think, feel, and behave. It can impact how you handle daily activities such as sleeping, eating, or working.

It does not discriminate; ANYONE can have depression.

How do I know if I am depressed? What are the Symptoms?

While sadness can be a normal reaction to life events, it can also be a symptom. However, some people with depression do not feel sadness at all. A person with depression also may experience many **physical symptoms**, such as aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or **digestive problems**. Someone with depression also may have trouble **sleeping**, waking up in the morning, and feeling **tired**. If you have been experiencing any of the following signs and symptoms for at least two weeks, you may be suffering from depression:

*Persistent sadness, anxious, or “empty” * Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism * Irritability * Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness * Decreased energy or fatigue * Difficulty sleeping, early morning awakening, or oversleeping * Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities * Moving or talking more slowly * Feeling restless or having trouble sitting still * Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions * Changes in appetite or weight * Thoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attempts * Aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems without a clear physical cause that do not ease up even with treatment * Grades may slip for teens or younger*

Am I still a Christian if I am Depressed? Let's first consider what being Christian is: *Accepting that Christ is God. Knowing He died on the cross for all our sins as our Savior. Trusting that He arose from death and is Alive today. He paid the price for our Eternity. He is THE ONLY way to Heaven. Asking Him to lead you and love you as your Lord every day so that you can be more and more like Him. So, can we be a Christian and still struggle with depression? Yes. We can struggle, we can admit it, and make a plan to address it. There were several Bible Heroes, including Jesus, who experienced symptoms of Depression:*

Jesus - "My soul is sorrowful even to death." (Matt 26:36-46)

King David - Lost his baby son. (2 Samuel 19:1)

Job - Lost all his children, his health, his wealth. (Job 3:2-11)

Elijah - Fatigued, tired, needed sleep and nutrition. (1 Kings 19:3-4)

Jonah - Swallowed by a big fish. (Jonah 4)

Nehemiah (2:1-3)

All these individuals trusted the Lord and made it through their depression/sorrow/anxiety.

What can I Do? There are several things you can do if you feel or think you are depressed, as even the most severe cases of depression can be treated. Depression is commonly treated with medication, psychotherapy/also known as Talk Therapy, or a combination of the two. If you think you have depression or symptoms of depression:

1. **Make an appointment** with your **Family Physician** for a check-up. Your physician can rule out any medical issues. They may also suggest medication and/or talk-therapy.

2. **Seek a Psychotherapist:**

- a. Contact your Insurance Co for list of In-Network clinicians.
- b. Ask your family physician if they have a referral list.
- c. Ask a trusted friend if they know anyone.
- d. Do a search on *PsychologyToday.com*
- e. If you prefer more private appts online in the privacy of your home, ask therapist if they do online counseling OR you can go to BetterHelp.com or Teledoc or search for other online organizations.

3. **Other things you can do:**

- **Get fresh air and sunlight.** Go outside and sit during a break or lunch hour.
- **Move, exercise;** take the stairs vs. elevator, park further from the bldg. so you have to walk a tad farther to your destination.
- **Remain in relationships** with friends, family, colleagues; avoid isolation.
- **Get out of bed.** The more you isolate and sleep, the more you will want to isolate and sleep...a vicious cycle.
- **Healthy nutrition** and drink enough water.
- **Healthy Self-Talk** - It will get better with a little bit of intention & **IT'S WORTH IT.** You have **NOT** failed. You are not weak. What we **THINK**, leads to what we **FEEL**, leads to what we **DO** (Take your Cognitive Triangle → Biblical Cognitive Triangle). Work on achieving a true perspective of your situation, "I am currently in a struggle. I will put a plan together, seek assistance, and stay the course....it will get better. **JESUS** died for **ME.** **HE** tells me to come to Him and He will give me His Love and Healing.
- **Get good sleep!** Sleep can impact your mood and overall health in **BIG** ways.
- **Avoid alcohol** or other substances to cope. If you have urge, do something else healthy.
- **Establish your TRUTHS:** Those thoughts that are encouraging, motivating, and **TRUE** no matter what is going on in life. When you are in a struggle, **ReMind** yourself of your **TRUTHs.** **IT WILL GET BETTER.**

What can I do if a family member has depression? You can Love, Listen, Lend.

Love them by Listening and Lend your patience and support. Know that a person with depression cannot just "snap out of it". As well-meaning as friends or family members try to be, telling someone with depression to "Snap out of it," OR "Just be positive," OR "You can be happier if you just try harder" may cause more distress than needed. Depression is REAL. It is not a sign of a person's weakness or a character flaw. The truth is that most people who experience depression need treatment to get better.

- **REMIN**D them you love them.
- **CHECK IN** on your loved ones weekly or more.
- **ASK** them to go out to eat, or just offer a quiet coffee chat and listen.
- **MAKE A MEAL**, offer to help around the house while they are getting their bearings.