

# Hope & Healing

## Depression Getting Control Of Depression

A heart at peace gives life to the body — Proverbs 14:30

### Introduction

Depression is the most common of all our emotions, so common in fact that you might think of it as the “common cold” of emotions. It is a feeling of gloom or sadness that is severe enough to slow down the body’s functions to the point that nothing seems to work as it should. If you become depressed your pain and suffering will also extend to those who care about you. Serious depression can destroy your family life as well as your own.

Depression is a “whole-body” illness, involving every system of your body as well as your moods and thoughts. It affects the way you eat and sleep, the way you feel about yourself, and the way you think about things. It is not just a passing blue mood which everyone has from time to time. It is not a sign of personal weakness or a condition that can be willed or wished away. People with a depressive illness cannot merely “pull themselves together” and get better. Without treatment, symptoms can last for weeks, months, or years. Appropriate treatment, however, can help most people who suffer from depression, and sometimes improvement can occur very quickly.

### Types of Depression

There are three main types of depressive illness, but professionals use a confusing number of terms. A psychiatrist, for example, may say that someone has bipolar, clinical, endogenous, major, melancholic, or unipolar depression. These labels confuse people who may not know that they can overlap. People with

depressive illness may also receive more than one diagnosis since the illness is often linked with other problems such as alcohol abuse, eating disorders, or anxiety disorders. For our purposes we will use three categories of depression:

**Clinical Depression.** Clinical depression is depression severe enough to treat. More severe cases of clinical depression are called major depression.

This type of depression is caused by an extreme reaction to a specific emotional blow such as the death of someone you loved, the end of a marriage or love affair, or a financial loss.

**Dysthymia.** This is a form of depression that keeps people from functioning at full steam or of enjoying life. It goes on for years. Sometimes people with dysthymia also develop clinical depressive illness.

**Bipolar.** This was called manic-depressive illness until recently. It is marked by gradual or swift cycles of depression alternating with extreme elation. When in the depressed cycle all the symptoms of depression are present. During the elation or manic phase, judgment, thinking, and social behavior can cause serious problems and embarrassment. Such a person for example, may buy three large automobiles in one day or make other unwise business and financial decisions.

### Symptoms of Depression

Not everyone who is depressed will experience every one of the following

symptoms. Some persons experience a few; others will develop many.

#### Depression

- Persistent sad, anxious, or “empty” moods.
- Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism.
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness.
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities that were once enjoyed, including sex.
- Insomnia, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping.
- Appetite and/or weight loss or overeating and weight gain.
- Decreased energy, fatigue, being “slowed down.”
- Thoughts of death or suicide; suicide attempts.
- Restlessness, irritability.
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decision.
- Persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment, such as headaches, digestive disorders, and chronic pain.

In nearly all depression, one of the essential symptoms is fatigue. There’s also a general lack of interest in life and a lack of energy to engage in normal activities. The sufferer becomes lifeless and lies around, refusing to get out of bed or escaping into television watching or other activities that make no demands.

## Making the Diagnosis \_\_\_\_\_

A diagnosis of clinical depression must usually rest on the presence of at least four of the following eight main symptoms:

- Loss of appetite.
- Weight and sleep disturbances.
- Either lifelessness or hyperactivity.
- Anxiety.
- Crying spells.
- Slowed thinking.
- Thoughts of death or suicide.
- Feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness and guilt.

The first step in diagnosis is to uncover any possible physical caused with a thorough medical history and appropriate diagnostic tests.

## Treatment \_\_\_\_\_

Depression is treatable — sometimes with drugs, sometimes through specific kinds of psychotherapy, and sometimes using a combination.

**Cognitive Thinking.** A very effective therapy that breaks down negative thinking.

**Interpersonal Therapy.** Therapy that focuses on resolving conflicts about past and current relationships.

**Medications.** The choices include several classes of antidepressants, each with its particular indications, desired effects and undesired effects.

**Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT).** Electric shock therapy can quickly help some persons with severe depression that is resistant to medication or psychotherapy.

## What Families and Friends Can Do

- Make certain that your loved one doesn't skip meals, eats nutritious foods, and goes to sleep and awakes at regular hours.
- Be available to play cards, take a walk, go to a movie or a ballgame or to engage in church or social activities with your loved one.

## What the Depressed Person Can Do to Overcome Negative Thoughts \_\_\_\_\_

- Take on responsibility slowly. Don't expect too much too soon.
- Do things that make you feel better.
- Make an effort to be with other people.
- Begin daily mild exercises such as walking.
- Be patient.
- Do not make major life decisions.
- Help yourself as you can and do not blame yourself when the going seems slow.

## Summary \_\_\_\_\_

No one is immune to depression but there are so many new drugs and different forms of effective psychotherapy that those with depression can be optimistic that they will soon improve. Never give up hope. Don't drift into constant negative thinking. Act. Do one little thing to begin overcoming your depression and that little thing will lead to another and another and another until you're on your way to recovery.

## Awaken the Miracles Within You

### The Miracle Of Meditation

We are told to constantly meditate on divine things. Meditation is the most powerful form of prayer. Yet, some say, "I'm not able to do that," and so they cut themselves off from a quick and sure form of spiritual growth.

The fact is, everyone meditates.

Think about it. During baseball season you let go the problems of life and read the sports page steadily for 10 to 15 minutes every morning. Everything else fades from your mind. Putting down the paper, you contemplate your favorite players, rule changes and the ump's decisions.

This is first class meditation.

Now, substitute the Bible for the paper. Read awhile. Then, think about God. Next, think about yourself and your life.

Do this daily for a wonderful meditation and for miraculous results.

*The recommendations and information in this handout are appropriate in most cases. However, for specific information concerning your personal medical condition, please, consult your doctor.*