



## How Psychotherapy Helps People Recover from Depression

### Description

The National Institute of Mental Health estimates that 17 million adult Americans suffer from depression in any given year. Many people are unaware that they have a problem that can be adequately addressed. This fact sheet answers questions about depression and focuses on how psychotherapy can help a depressed individual.



## What distinguishes depression from occasional sadness?

Everyone experiences sadness or “blues” at times. Most people grieve after a traumatic life event, such as a significant illness, job loss, a death in the family, or divorce. These grieving feelings tend to fade on their own over time.

Depression develops when feelings of profound sadness or despair linger for at least two weeks or more and interfere with daily activities such as working, eating, and sleeping. Depressed people often feel helpless and hopeless, and they blame themselves for these feelings.

Some may have considered death or suicide. Depressed people may become overwhelmed and fatigued, and they may stop participating in certain daily tasks entirely. They may isolate themselves

from family and friends.

## **What factors contribute to depression?**

Changes in the chemistry of the body influence mood and thought processes, and biological factors have a role in some forms of depression. Furthermore, depression can accompany chronic and catastrophic illnesses such as heart disease or cancer.

However, for many people, depression first and mainly indicates that certain mental and emotional parts of a person's life are out of balance. Significant life transitions and pressures, such as the death of a loved one or the loss of a job, can contribute to depression.

Other, more subtle elements that contribute to a loss of identity or self-esteem may also play a role. Because the reasons for depression are not often obvious, the disease necessitates comprehensive evaluation and diagnosis by a competent mental health care practitioner.

Depression can be caused by situations over which an individual has little or no control. However, depression can also arise when people are unable to recognize that they have options and can affect change in their lives.

## **Can depression be successfully treated?**

Absolutely. When an individual receives competent care, depression is highly curable. Psychologists are qualified and highly trained mental health specialists who have years of experience researching depression and assisting people in recovering from it.

Seeking help for emotional and mental illnesses, especially depression, still carries some shame or hesitation. Unfortunately, depression is sometimes misinterpreted as a sign of weakness rather than as an indication that something is out of balance.

People who are depressed cannot simply "snap out of it" and feel better on their own. People suffering from depression who do not seek help suffer needlessly. Unexpressed sentiments and anxieties, combined with feelings of solitude, can exacerbate depression. The significance of receiving high-quality professional health care cannot be overstated.

## **How does psychotherapy aid in the recovery of people suffering from depression?**

Psychotherapy techniques such as cognitive-behavioral, interpersonal, psychodynamic, and other types of "talk therapy" can help depressed people recover. Psychotherapy allows patients to recognize the elements that contribute to their depression and deal with the psychological, behavioral, interpersonal, and situational causes successfully. Skilled therapists, such as certified psychologists, can work with depressed people to

- Identify the life issues that are contributing to their depression and help them realize which aspects of

those issues they may be able to address or improve. A competent therapist can assist depressed patients in identifying future possibilities and setting realistic goals that will allow them to improve their mental and emotional well-being. Therapists can also assist clients in identifying how they have successfully dealt with similar symptoms in the past if they have been depressed.

- Recognize negative or distorted thought patterns that contribute to feelings of hopelessness and helplessness that accompany depression. For example, depressed individuals may tend to overgeneralize, that is, to conceive about things in terms of “always” or “never”. They might also take things personally. A skilled and knowledgeable therapist can assist in cultivating a more optimistic view of life.
- Investigate additional learned thoughts and behaviors that cause problems and lead to depression. Therapists, for example, might assist depressed individuals in understanding and improving patterns of interaction with other people that contribute to their depression. We assist people in regaining control and enjoyment in their lives. Psychotherapy assists patients in seeing options and progressively reintroducing fun, rewarding activities into their lives.

Getting one bout of depression increases the likelihood of having another. There is some evidence that continued treatment may minimize the likelihood or intensity of future episodes. People can develop ways to avoid unnecessary suffering from future periods of depression through treatment.

## **What other ways do therapists assist sad people and their loved ones?**

Support and involvement from family and friends can be invaluable in assisting someone who is depressed. Individuals in the “support system” can assist a depressed loved one by encouraging him or her to remain with treatment and apply the coping mechanisms and problem-solving skills learned in psychotherapy.

Living with someone who is sad can be extremely tough and stressful for family members and friends. The agony of watching a loved one suffer from depression can leave you feeling helpless and bereft.

Family or marital therapy may be good in bringing all those affected by depression together and assisting them in learning appropriate strategies to deal with it together. This sort of psychotherapy can also provide an excellent opportunity for people who have never experienced depression to learn more about it and develop positive strategies to support a loved one who is depressed.

## **Are antidepressant medicines effective?**

Medications can be quite effective in lowering depression symptoms in some people, especially in cases of mild to severe depression. Some doctors who treat depression may recommend a mix of psychotherapy and medication. Because of the risks, any medicine must be closely monitored by the doctor who prescribed it.

Some people who are depressed may prefer psychotherapy to medicine, especially if their depression is not severe. A certified and trained mental health practitioner can help offer recommendations about an appropriate course of treatment for an individual’s depression by completing a complete

assessment. Depression can severely impede a person's capacity to operate in daily life. However, the chances of recovery for depressed people who seek adequate professional help are relatively good. Those suffering from depression can recover control of their lives by engaging with a trained and experienced therapist.

### **Category**

1. Lifestyle

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