

Community Institute for Psychotherapy

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2024-2025 News & Notes



2024 October News and Notes

Many Faces of Depression

By Robin Joy Berenson, PhD, LMFT

A primary reason for an annual National Depression Screening Day is the prevalence of the disorder. According to the Cleveland Clinic website, “Depression is common. Researchers estimate that nearly 7% of adults in the United States have depression every year. More than 16% of U.S. adults — around 1 in 6 people — will experience depression at some point in their lifetime. Approximately 4.4% of children in the United States have depression.... These figures, however, don’t include those who do not receive treatment or a diagnosis.” Actual incidence is understood to be significantly higher. ¹

According to Mental Health America, individuals should be screened for depression if they are experiencing some of these symptoms:

- A persistent sad, anxious or "empty" mood
- Sleeping too little, early morning awakening, or sleeping too much
- Reduced appetite and weight loss, or increased appetite and weight gain
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed
- Restlessness or irritability
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Thoughts of death or suicide

However, they caution: Screenings are not a professional diagnosis. They recommend seeing your doctor or a qualified mental health professional if you experience five or more of these symptoms for longer than two weeks or if the symptoms are severe enough to interfere with your daily routine. ²

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As more is learned about depression and its causes (not all of which are known), professionals have identified more than six different types of depression. Here are the most common.

Major Depressive Disorder (MDD): Often referred to as “clinical depression,” it is the most severe form.

Persistent Depressive Disorder (PDD): Formerly referred to as dysthymia, this is a milder or more moderate form depression, diagnosed when it lasts for at least two years.

Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD): As its name implies this occurs with a woman’s menstrual cycle, with symptoms of irritability, anxiety and/or low mood.

Bipolar Disorder: Sufferers experience a range of physical and emotional symptoms, including hopelessness and loss of self-esteem, irritability and disorganization, alternatively with “period of abnormally elevated mood known as mania.” According to verywellmind.com, “the risk of suicide in bipolar illness is about 15 times greater than in the general population.”

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD): Believed to be triggered by a disturbance in the normal circadian rhythm of the body, SAD is a form of major depressive disorder that typically arises during the fall and winter and goes away during the spring and summer.

Postpartum Depression: Distinguished from the common “baby blues” both in duration (weeks versus days) and severity, this manifests with a range of symptoms, such as not feeling connected to the baby, low energy or motivation, and little interest in the baby. Sufferers should seek help promptly.

Atypical Depression: This form of depression differs from major depressive disorder by virtue of the fact that sufferers experience a temporary mood improvement in

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response to positive events (mood reactivity). Other key symptoms include increased appetite and rejection sensitivity. 3

What to Do

The first step in addressing depression should be a consultation with a health care professional. Among treatments that have proved successful are medication, psychotherapy, and therapies such as acupuncture, massage, hypnosis and biofeedback.

Similarly, a number of lifestyle choices can help to improve depressive symptoms, including regular exercise, good sleep hygiene, a healthy diet and avoiding alcohol, as well as spending time with people you care about and engaging in personally meaningful activities.

1 <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9290-depression>

2 <https://www.mhanational.org/national-depression-screening-day>

3 <https://www.verywellmind.com/common-types-of-depression-1067313>