

## Exploring Depression

Depression is very common. Most of us have felt “down” at times, but serious depression is a “downer” over a longer period. (The purpose of this article is in no way intended for diagnostic or prescribing purposes, but is simply a brief overview of a very complex topic.)

It is important to understand what depression is in order to do anything about it. There are varying degrees of depression. Sometimes people can feel depressed a little and it goes away easily. Sometimes people can be depressed a lot, and it doesn't go away, but leads to suicidal tendencies. These would represent the two ends of a continuum. Where do you fall on the continuum?

When considering this “continuum” idea, you can see different people will need different treatment. Not all people will need help, as some can overcome it on their own, but any depression that continues for more than 2 weeks needs attention from a qualified practitioner.

Depression is often associated with low serotonin levels, but this doesn't, in my opinion, lead to a very explicit definition of depression. (At least one that most people can understand.) A better way, I believe, to start understanding depression is to think of depression as this: When a person requires something outside themselves to motivate them or make them “feel” happy. In other words, they lack the “inner motivation” or “ability” to take care of their own happiness. They are heavily reliant on other people, places, and things.

One warning: Do not confuse being tired with being depressed. You can be tired without being depressed, but you usually don't have depression without being tired. It is also worth mentioning that anxiety, euphoria, irritability, unreasonableness, and mood swings often accompany depression

A lack of serotonin will make one tired. A lack of melatonin will cause sleep imbalances. Also, low serotonin levels will cause low melatonin levels as well, because some serotonin will convert to melatonin in the evening to help induce sleep.

Going back to my definition, this creates an umbrella, which I believe many people will reside under. It is just a matter of degree. A lot of people are dealing with depression and don't realize it. I have seen this a lot and it is sad because people aren't living up to their potential. Depression even in small amounts can hurt one's self-esteem and the ability to accomplish their best in life. What are the causes? What can we do about it?

First of all, depression that gets worse needs to be seen by a qualified practitioner or doctor. Some people have found some drugs to be helpful. But usually the drugs are a short-term solution and those who are on them, need to address the deeper problems.

Depression can be caused by unresolved anger, toxic liver /colon, very run-down weak immune system, run-down brain from stress, living with toxic people, food allergies, dietary imbalances, abuse as a child, blood sugar imbalances etc. The causes are numerous as are the solutions.

Solutions would be; reduce unnecessary stress, 12 step programs for the codependent or drug abuse, Cognitive therapy to change thoughts, Acupuncture, Herbs like St. John's wort, Black Cohosh, Lemon Balm, Damiana, Ginkgo, Ginseng ; Minerals like trace

minerals, chromium for blood sugar imbalances; B vitamins, Essential Fatty Acids like; Flax oil, Evening Primrose Oil, Borage Oil, Hemp Oil, Fish Oils, or Combinations of any of the oils; Vitamin C, antioxidants like Grape Seed Extract, Pine Bark Extract, Essential Oils like; Geranium, Lemon, Grapefruit, Ylang Ylang etc.

The more severe the depression, the more intense the program you will need to follow.

There are ways to prevent depression. Here are a few suggestions to put into practice:

- a) Don't take on too much. Bite off what you can chew, but no more.
- b) Prioritize your "to-do" list. Remember you are human, not a machine.
- c) If you have abuse issues, seek appropriate help.
- d) Learn to ask for help if you need it. Don't do it on your own.
- e) Concentrate on what you can change, not what is beyond your control.
- f) Eat according to your blood type. Diet is huge in mental health.

Whatever you do for yourself to help your depression heal, try to seek out trustworthy people so you can bounce your ideas off them. This will help you find your way better. Eventually, you will be able to trust your own "gut instinct" which really is considered your second brain!

Monica Hirai, Certified Herbalist, Holistic Practitioner, Owner of Hirai Health Services, helps humans of all ages to obtain maximum health through herbs, homeopathic remedies, diet and aromatherapy.