About Mood Disorders

Marked by changes in mood, depression and bipolar disorder (also known as manic depression) are both highly treatable, medical illnesses. Unfortunately, many people don't get the help they need because of the misunderstanding surrounding the illnesses or the fear associated with stigma. The following are brief descriptions of depression and bipolar disorder. For more in-depth information, be sure to see our pages on depression and bipolar disorder and the differences between them.

Depression: It's Not Just In Your Head

Everyone, at various times in life, feels sad or blue. It's normal to feel sad on occasion. Sometimes, sadness is a result of things that happen in your life: for example, you move to a different city and leave friends behind...you lose your job...or a loved one dies. But what's the difference between "normal" feelings of sadness and the feelings caused by depression?

- **How intense the mood is:** Depression is more intense than a simple "bad mood."
- **How long the mood lasts:** A bad mood is usually gone in a few days, but depression lasts two weeks or longer.
- **How much it interferes with your life:** A bad mood doesn't keep you from going to work or school or spending time with friends. Depression can keep you from doing these things and may even make it difficult to get out of bed.

While it's normal for people to experience ups and downs during their lives, those living with depression experience specific symptoms daily for two weeks or more, making it difficult to function at work, at school, or in relationships.

Depression is a treatable illness marked by changes in mood, thought, and behavior. It affects people of all ages, races, ethnic groups, and social classes. Although it can occur at any age, the illness often surfaces between the ages of 25 and 44. The "lifetime prevalence" of depression is 24 percent for women and 15 percent for men. This means that, at some point in their lives, 24 percent of women and 15 percent of men will experience an episode of major depression.

Click here to take a free & confidential screening for depression.

Bipolar Disorder: More Than A Mood Swing

Bipolar disorder (also known as manic depression) is a treatable illness marked by extreme changes in mood, thought, energy, and behavior. It is called bipolar disorder because a person's mood can alternate between the "poles" of mania (high, elevated mood) and depression (low, depressed mood). These changes in mood ("mood swings") can last for hours, days, weeks, or even months. These highs and lows are frequently seasonal. Many people with bipolar disorder report feeling symptoms of depression more often in the winter and symptoms of mania more often in the spring.

Bipolar disorder affects nearly six (6) million adult Americans and an equal number of men and women. It tends to run in families and is found among all races, ethnic groups, and social classes. Like depression and other serious illnesses, bipolar disorder can also adversely affect spouses, significant others, family members, friends, and coworkers. It usually begins in late adolescence (often appearing as depression during the teen years), although it can start in early childhood or as late as the 40s and 50s.

Click here to take a free & confidential screening for mania.

Mood Disorders are Treatable

The majority of people with mood disorders are able to find treatments that work. Talk therapy, medication, or a combination of both help individuals feel better and change situations in their lives that may be contributing to their illnesses (substance use, harmful relationships, etc.).

Learn More About:

Depression
Bipolar disorder
Anxiety (a condition that often coexists with a mood disorder)

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