



Depression — It's Real.

Fiction: Depression is a temporary mood that will cure itself in time. It is a sign of weakness. A person suffering from depression can simply "snap out of it" by changing his or her attitude.

Fact: Depression is a medical condition that is mentally and physically agonizing and can lead to loss of friends, withdrawal from life and eventually to self mutilation and suicide. There are no magical cures, nor can a person simply "snap out of it." Mild depression can be eased with self-help, but clinical depression will not simply "go away." Professional intervention is vital to controlling or curing depression.

Depression is a common medical condition. With an estimated 21 million adults (8.3% of the US population) having a major depressive episode each year. For adolescents aged 12-17, an estimated 5 million (20.1% young people in the US) have at least one major depressive episode each year.

Depression can strike anyone at any time. However, women are twice as likely to suffer from depression than men. Nobody knows what triggers depression, but scientists who specialize in depression have zeroed in on two natural chemicals in the brain: **serotonin** and **norepinephrine**. Scientists believe these two chemicals affect mood and the painful symptoms of depression.

When these two chemicals fall out of balance, both the bodily pain and mood symptoms of depression appear. The link between depression and suicide is well established. Studies show that 90% of people who chose suicide had a depressive disorder. The good news is that depression is treatable.

Prescribed medication is now available to counteract those painful mental and physical effects of depression. This medication is often used in conjunction with psychiatric counseling to uncover the mental root of depression.

RESOURCES

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:

Available 24-hours a day in English or Spanish.

Call or Text: 988

Visit: [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org)

The National Alliance on Mental Illness

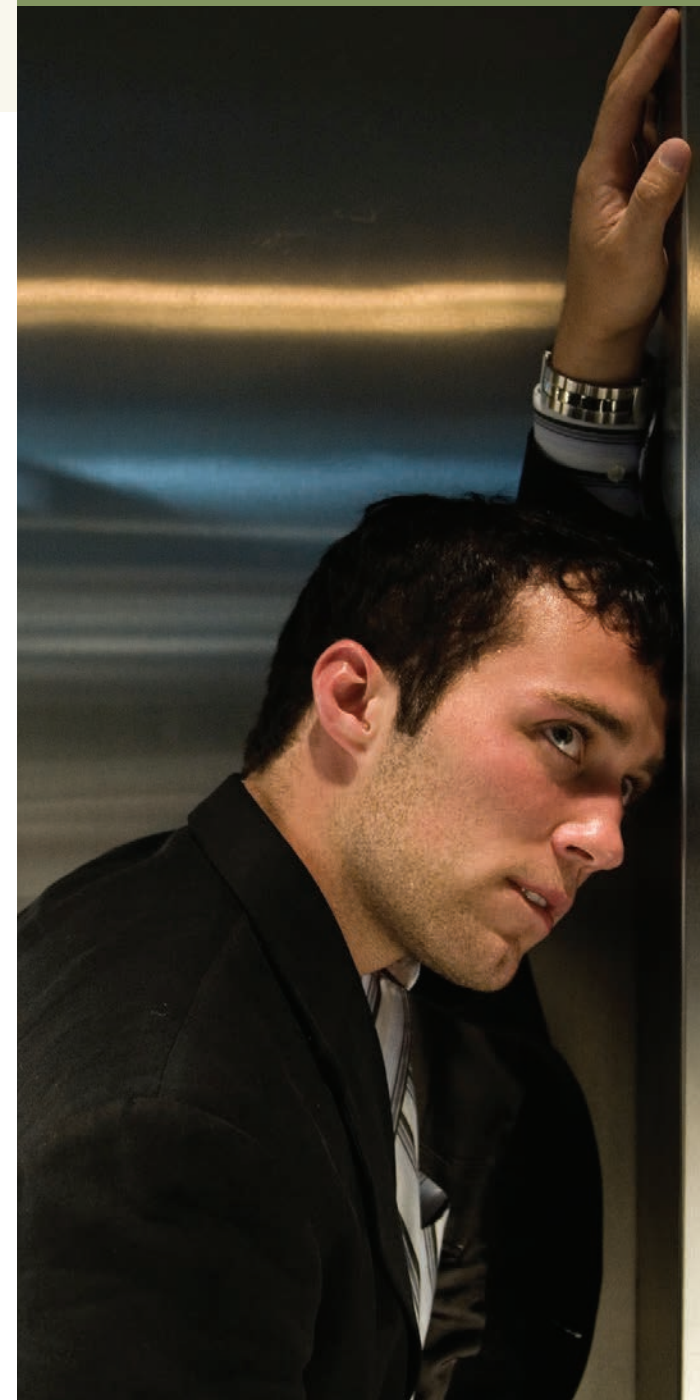
[nami.org](https://www.nami.org)

1-800-950-NAMI (6264)

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A Bad Rap

Depression is a mental illness. While mental health advocates have made strides to destigmatize the disorder, many people with depression are treated differently than people with any other medical condition. Struggling with depression does not make you crazy — it is simply a medical condition that demands professional attention.

Like any other illness, depression is treated by a medical doctor who specializes in neurology or psychiatry, or by a state licensed counselor. Intervention may include prescribed medication, counseling, or a combination of both.

A depressed person should never feel ashamed because of their illness. Friends and acquaintances of a depressed person should never ostracize or make light of depression, nor should they dispense thoughtless, off-the-cuff advice such as “Oh, just snap out of it,” or “You’ll get over it.” Those types of thoughtless, hurtful comments only enforce, the depressed person’s feelings of hopelessness and deepen the depression.

90% of suicides are caused by depression.

First Signs of Depression

First, it’s important to distinguish between a “bout of the blues” and a deepening clinical depression. At some point, everyone becomes depressed over the everyday ebbs and flows of life: death of a loved one, loss of a job or expected promotion, unexpected disruptions such as an unanticipated bill, or even something as minor as a flat tire. This type of temporary depression is normal and dissipates in time.

When depression lingers and symptoms persist, you should become concerned and seek help. Symptoms that are signals that it may be time to seek help include:

- Feeling sad, anxious, or emotionless all the time
- Feeling hopelessness, pessimism, helplessness, guilt, and worthlessness
- Sleeping far more than usual or having trouble sleeping
- Distancing yourself from friends or usually pleasurable activities, including sex
- Suffering from “mystery” aches and pains, particularly headaches
- Drastic shifts in weight in a relatively short period of time
- Giving up on life and no longer participating in necessary and normal everyday activities such as job, family commitments, prayer life and social commitments
- Talking about death, dying, and suicide, as well as ways of carrying out a suicide plan



While all of the symptoms of depression are cause for concern, the last one – talk centering on suicide – should raise red flags that you’re dealing with a tragedy in the making. Such talk should not be taken lightly, nor should you try to “tough it out” or play amateur therapist. This warning sign should tell you that it’s time to call in professional help.

Self-help CAN work!

If depression has just begun to set in and is mild, there are ways to help yourself:

- Spend your time with positive, up-beat people who you trust.
- Join in on and keep up with social opportunities, even if you don’t feel like going out.
- Take up a new activity or sport, and stay active. Physical activity like exercise creates endorphins that can keep you mentally and physically happy.
- Eat healthy foods, because what you eat has a direct effect on how you feel. Don’t skip meals, and eat a balanced diet of protein, complex carbs, fruits, and veggies.
- Focus on getting a healthy eight hours of sleep — no less and no more.
- Pinpoint what causes you stress, make realistic goals, don’t be hard on yourself, and plan ahead.
- Stay positive! Writing down a list of things you are grateful for is a good start to being positive.

And constantly remind yourself: **There is always tomorrow, and tomorrow is FULL of POSSIBILITIES!**

Depression weakens the immune system, making you susceptible to physical disorders.

Act early. Act now!

If you’re depressed or have a friend or loved one who is depressed, seek help from a licensed medical professional. Check online for listings, or ask family, friends, your minister, or a community outreach center for suggestions. And, most importantly, keep emergency numbers such as the ones listed below on hand. Calling any one of these resources at the first sign of depression in yourself or a friend or loved one may just save your life or theirs:

988 & Crisis Lifeline
Call or Text: 988

The National Alliance on Mental Illness
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