

Depression

Behavioral Health Awareness Depression

Welcome to the Behavioral Health Awareness Module on Depression. Additional resources are available by selecting the Resources link in the top right corner of the window. If you have visual or auditory assistance needs, please select the Accessibility On/Off button for help with this training.

Depression Is Being Colorblind...

Depression is being colorblind and constantly told how colorful the world is

What You Will Learn

Everyone has bad days, or even weeks. At what point does a “bad day” become something more serious? Have you ever wondered why your friend, colleague, or even yourself can not shake off the ‘funk’ - the presence of something heavy surrounding someone you know or love? If you have, you’re not alone.

This table of contents provides an outline for what you will learn in this training. We will help you recognize misconceptions you might hold about depression, understand depression and its effects, and learn strategies for supporting people who live with the condition. We invite you to explore the following chapters that address questions you may have about the topic. You also have the option to move freely about the module using the player menu on the left-hand side of the window. You are free to start, stop, or pause the module at any time.

Depression Affects 450 Million

Affecting 450 million people globally, depression is a widespread condition that can have devastating effects when left untreated. (PsychCentral, 2016)

What Is Depression?

No person is defined solely by the challenges they face. Open the photo album to learn more.



This training is funded by Texas Health and Human Services Commission

Everyone has a unique identity, and people walk through life wearing many hats to fulfill many roles. They are husbands and wives, parents and guardians, children and siblings, friends and neighbors. Experiencing depression does not define or diminish the limits of who someone is or what they do. It is just one of many experiences that makes up a person's life.

Depression is an illness that hijacks someone's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors for a sustained period of time (Solomon, 2001). People struggling with depression experience something different than fleeting sadness. Andrew Solomon's award-winning novel, "The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression" describes depression as "the aloneness within us made manifest, and it destroys not only connection to others but also the ability to be peacefully alone with oneself." In other words, depression makes it difficult to connect with others and to even live at peace alone.

Introducing Enrique and Mary

I'm Enrique, and I'm a freshman in college and I recently found out my roommate John has been living with depression.

I'm Mary, a 30-year old wife and mother, and I was recently diagnosed with depression.

Throughout this training session, you'll be hearing from us. We're going to tell the stories of how depression has affected our lives and what we have learned in the process.

Enrique Is Worried About John

John's been one of my best friends since we first got to college. John is one of those people who seems to be good at whatever he does. He made great grades in high school, was captain of the football team and class president. When we first got to college, he signed up for intramural football and joined a fraternity. But towards the end of our first semester, I noticed some changes in John. He started staying in the dorm a lot, skipped a bunch of classes, and basically slept or ate all day. When he did try some school work, he wasn't very productive. He started turning down invites to hang out with friends and was ignoring calls from his family. I asked John what was wrong, and he'd always say he was just tired. I told him to snap out of the funk he was in - he was missing out on so much. I didn't know what was going on with him or how I could help.

Myths and Misconceptions

People commonly hold misconceptions about depression. While some think that those



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suffering from depression should be able to “snap out of it,” others think depression “isn’t a real illness.” Some believe that “talking about it makes things worse.” If you have ever held one of these thoughts about depression, you are not alone. Misconceptions and myths about depression are common and widespread (“9 Depression Myths,” n.d.).

These misconceptions about depression can make people feel ashamed, like there is a mark or stain on them. All of these can lead people to deny or not recognize how serious their condition is, or prevent them from seeking help altogether.

Snap out of it

Well-meaning friends and family can be known to want to help a person with depression look on the bright side of things, or think positively to get out of the funk they are in. Unfortunately, depression is more complicated than that, and people living with the condition can’t just “snap out of it” any more than someone with cancer or heart disease can.

Depression isn’t a real illness

Some people deny that depression is a real illness or think it’s all in a person’s head. The truth is that depression is a real condition that affects the chemistry and structure of the brain. It’s no different from a physical health condition like diabetes when it comes to the impact on someone’s life.

Talking about it makes things worse

Some people also avoid discussing their symptoms because they fear giving voice to the symptoms may make the depression worse or make it more real. People may be reluctant to discuss their symptoms because they fear they will be seen as weak, broken, or having personally done something to bring on the depression. In reality, being alone with your thoughts can be harmful, while finding non-judgmental and supportive listeners can be an incredibly positive part of recovery.

Overcoming Misconceptions

Fortunately, more and more people in recent years are speaking out about mental health in hopes of overcoming misconceptions, including celebrities and major news sources. TIME magazine published a special edition on mental health. This type of exposure, coupled with social media campaigns and celebrity discussions, is bringing to light the once taboo topic of depression. “It’s become the new norm for stars to divulge

vulnerabilities once kept closely guarded” (US News, 2018).

The Rock

Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson opens up about depression.

“We all go thru the sludge... and depression never discriminates. Took me a long time to realize it but the key is to not be afraid to open up. Especially us dudes have a tendency to keep it in. You’re not alone.”

Adele

Adele discusses her battle with postpartum depression.

“My knowledge of postpartum - or postnatal, as we call it in England - is that you don’t want to be with your child; you’re worried you might hurt your child; you’re worried you weren’t doing a good job. But I was obsessed with my child. I felt very inadequate; I felt like I’d made the worst decision of my life ... It can come in many different forms.”

Demi Lovato

Demi Lovato quoted Patrick Kennedy in a tweet, saying “It’s time we started taking mental illness as serious as physical illnesses.” The brain is an important organ too...

16.2 Million in the US Suffer from Depression

In 2016, it was estimated that 16.2 million adults in the U.S. alone, or 6.7 percent of the population, have suffered from a depressive episode in a given year. (Healthline, 2018)

Who Is Affected?

Depression is more common than you might have thought. Depression does not discriminate, affecting both children and adults, men and women, regardless of ethnicity, nationality, or financial status. Knowing why depression sets in and who's likely to be affected by it can help you better understand it and recognize it in others. Depression is twice as common in women as it is in men, partially due to female hormones, but also because women are more likely than men to report and admit to depression.

Depression most often affects people between the ages of 45 to 65, but rates are also increasing in our youth and aging populations.

Many people with depression are struggling with some other health condition, such as anxiety, diabetes, or heart disease, adding further stress and possible triggers for depressive symptoms.

Depression in Young Adults

Depression numbers are on the rise, specifically among children and young adults. Dr. Laurel Williams, Chief of Psychiatry at Texas Children's Hospital, thinks this age group feels especially rushed and pressured in today's society. She says, "Many people are worried about how busy they are. There's a lack of community. There's the amount of time we spend in front of screens and not in front of other people. I wouldn't say that social media is responsible for a rise in depression - more the being rushed and lack of connections that we have in the structure of how we live lives now" (NBC News, 2018). In addition, when children are exposed to ongoing stress and trauma at a young age, the development of their personalities and behaviors can be severely affected. This puts them at risk for developing both physical and mental conditions later in life.

Why Does Depression Develop?

Depression is a complex condition. Our biology, what we inherit in our genes from our relatives, how our brains work, and what we experience in our lives growing up and today all contribute to how much we are at risk for getting depression. When the right set of ingredients come together for someone, the symptoms of depression kick in. Depression is influenced by a combination of genetic, biological, environmental, and psychological factors.

Brain imaging studies show that those who live with depression may have a different brain makeup from those who do not. However, depression can also be influenced by environmental factors, including grief, stress, or traumatic events. When enough pieces of the puzzle are present, the combination can produce depressive symptoms.

Writing Down Depression

I wanted to write down exactly what I felt but somehow the paper stayed empty and I could not have described it any better.

Mary Feels Down

I'm Mary. I've been married to my husband for four years, and we have a young daughter named Lydia. Over the past few months, I've stopped enjoying playing with Lydia and being with my husband like I used to. I started spending more time at work to avoid going home, but I struggled to concentrate and constantly felt slowed down and sluggish. I was exhausted all the time, but when I tried to get more rest, I noticed how difficult it was for me to fall asleep. Everyday tasks like cooking and cleaning started to feel like an overwhelming effort. I felt guilty for not doing more for my family. I felt like a bad mother and a terrible wife.

Diagnosing Depression

After talking to my husband, I decided to go see a doctor. The doctor was able to diagnose me with depression after having a conversation with me about my symptoms. There's no official test to diagnose depression. The doctor told me that everyone can have a day or two when they are feeling depressed, but when these symptoms are present for multiple days or weeks, it might be something more serious. A diagnosis also requires that the person experiences either significant distress or problems being able to function day-to-day in addition to their symptoms. When I heard this, I thought about how my symptoms were affecting me at work and at home on a daily basis. I agreed to start treatment for my condition.

When Depression Takes Over...

When depression takes over, and I can't push through it, I have to close my door and shut the world out. It's the only way I know how to survive

Outpatient and Inpatient Care

Depression looks different for different people. The symptoms that appear, how intense they are, and how long they last all vary from person to person. Fortunately, there are different treatment options available to meet different needs. Determining which to use often depends on how serious the depression is. Treatment options fall into one of two categories: outpatient treatment or inpatient treatment.

Outpatient Treatment

Outpatient mental health treatment is best suited for those with mild to moderate symptoms and a solid support system. It does not require participants to live at a



treatment center. Instead, participants visit the treatment center or therapist's office on certain days of the week. Over 90 percent of depression is treated on an outpatient basis.

Inpatient Treatment

Inpatient treatment provides 24/7 care and access to numerous treatment options. This level of care is best suited for those who need constant medical supervision as well as those with relatively severe, long-term symptoms. Those who have not shown significant progress after outpatient interventions may benefit from extended inpatient treatment.

Types of Treatment

I'm Enrique. Remember that my roommate John was really struggling our first semester of college. He was sleeping all the time and stopped doing the activities he once enjoyed. Fortunately, at the beginning of the new semester there was an optional "Student Wellness" talk and I decided to go. The speaker talked about the signs and symptoms of depression and I had a light bulb moment when I recognized John might be depressed. The speaker told us about all sorts of treatment options for people living with depression. Click to learn more about these different treatment options.

Self Care

Self care activities support feelings of accomplishment. Self care might include meditation, cooking, journaling, or visiting the dog park with a pet. One proven form of self care for depression is exercise. When people exercise, they release "feel good" chemicals called endorphins which help people feel more relaxed and positive. (Tendzegolskis et al 1991; Goldfarb & Jamurtas 1997; Heyman et al 2012). Group exercise programs can provide social support and increase accountability for showing up. Since depression can make it difficult for someone to find the motivation for an activity, helping someone complete a task or simply being an encouraging presence can have a positive benefit. If the task feels overwhelming to the person, think first about how you can help them accomplish the first step, like getting to the door or getting dressed. Self care activities can be used in addition to other treatments like therapy and medication. A list of self help techniques can be found in the Resources section of this training.

Therapy

Psychotherapy, also known as talk therapy or counseling, can occur in individual or

group settings. A therapist is a non-judgmental person who provides a sounding board and create a safe space where new self-discoveries and insight can be explored. People typically see their therapists weekly or every other week. The same styles of therapy might not be effective or appealing for all individuals. Just as people have to try on several pairs of shoes to find a good fit, it's also common to meet several different therapists before finding the right one.

Medication

Medications used to treat depression are called "antidepressants." There are multiple naturally occurring chemicals in the brain that work to regulate emotions, including concentration, satisfaction, pleasure, anxiety, alertness, and motivation. Most antidepressants affect the neurotransmitters to help people achieve a balanced mood. A psychiatrist can help with determining the right medication and providing prescriptions. Some people have to try more than one type of antidepressant to find the right fit. In some cases, medication kicks in right away, while others don't see the full benefit of their medication for up to two months. You should encourage those in your life who are taking medication to be consistent and to follow up with their physicians about the effectiveness of the treatment. As with any prescription drug, antidepressants have some potential side effects. Common side effects include headaches, decreased sexual desire, disturbance in sleep patterns, and nausea (Iliades, 2015). Take note of any side effects and alert the prescribing physician if they persist beyond a reasonable period of time.

Peer Support Specialists

Peer support specialists are people who have lived with depression and can offer support, guidance, and hope to others. Talking to a peer can aid in countering self-blame and feelings of being alone in the experience. It can instill a sense of hope that if things improved for someone else, they can improve for them too.

Hospitalization

In cases of severe depression, some people may need to stay in the hospital for a short time. The hospital provides a safe environment where people can take a break from daily stresses. Going to the hospital can feel scary and many people feel ashamed, but recognizing when you need help takes insight and strength. Seeking help is always the best and safest idea. Family members and friends can also help provide encouragement. In severe cases, loved ones can call 911 and ask to speak with a mental health unit or crisis intervention team that will go to individuals' homes and talk with them. If they feel

a person is a danger to themselves or others, they will take them to the emergency room so they can be evaluated and possibly admitted.

Strategies to Overcome Depression

Recovery from depression is a process that doesn't happen in one day. Small, everyday acts of self-care can help on the journey toward recovery. Pursuing enjoyable activities, spending time with loved ones, focusing on giving and helping others can all help take the focus off a person's daily challenges. Depression works to shut down motivation, effort, and activity. Engaging in activities, getting up and out for even short periods, pushing yourself to do things no matter how hard they seem can lessen the heavy feeling that accompanies depression. Mary and John each put a different recovery activity into practice. Click on each of their photos to learn more about these strategies.

John Gives Back

John's therapist told him that symptoms of depression can develop into a cycle that becomes self-focused with an emphasis on the negative. One way to combat that is volunteering or serving in the community. Volunteering can help distract the mind from negative thinking or critical self talk and put the focus on an accomplishment instead. I offered to go with John to volunteer because sometimes his depression makes him want to stay isolated or withdrawn. We've been volunteering together every week at Habitat for Humanity. Last week, John told me how good it feels to do something that benefits other people and that he feels good about how he is spending his time. Volunteering also requires trying new activities or developing new skills, which has increased confidence and provided a new sense of identity for John. Volunteering makes us feel like we have purpose which can help bring a bigger perspective to our lives.

Mary's Toolbox

One strategy I'm using in my recovery is a list of things that bring me joy or fulfillment for when I need a quick boost in mood. My husband and Lydia help encourage me to use my toolbox, even on days when I'm not feeling good. Some of the ideas in my toolbox include:

- Reading a good book
- Watching a movie I enjoy
- Taking a bath
- Taking care of a task around the house

- Playing with our dog
- Calling a friend or family member
- Being creative
- Listening to music
- Exercising and
- Eating a food I love

You Are Not Alone

It is likely that you know someone who has depression because of how common the condition is. Recognizing the signs and symptoms of depression allows you to support those in your life who may live with it. You might be dealing with depression yourself, or you might know someone who is. Either way, help is available. Pursuing self care activities or talking to someone who has been through something similar, such as a peer support specialist, can be incredibly helpful. A therapist or physician can help provide other additional treatment options. Remember, you and those you care about are not alone in this. For a list of resources available in your area, visit mentalhealthtx.org.

Knowledge Check Instructions

It's time to practice what you've learned! This is a five question quiz.

Knowledge Check Question 1

Which of the following influence a person developing symptoms of depression? (Select all that apply.)

Correct	Choice
Yes	Genetics
Yes	Brain Composition
No	An Individual's Choices
Yes	Environmental Factors

Feedback when correct:

That is correct. Depression can develop due to: Genetic factors, Environmental factors, Brain composition. However, depression does not develop because of an individual's choices.

Feedback when incorrect:

Not quite. Depression can develop due to: Genetic factors, Environmental factors, Brain composition. However, depression does not develop because of an individual's choices.

1.35 Knowledge Check Question 2

Why do self-care activities, like exercise, reading, or cooking, have a positive effect on those living with depression? (Select all that apply.)

Correct	Choice
Yes	Self care activities can provide a sense of accomplishment.
No	Doing activities alone allows those with depression to isolate from crowds which can be comforting.
Yes	Many self care activities are done in the company of others which can provide opportunities for connection.
Yes	Self care activities can provide the opportunity to connect with an activity that was once enjoyed.

Feedback when correct:

That is correct. Self care activities can: provide a sense of accomplishment, give people the opportunity to experience activities they once enjoyed, and provide opportunities for connection with others

Feedback when incorrect:

Not quite. Self care activities can: provide a sense of accomplishment, give people the opportunity to experience activities they once enjoyed, and provide opportunities for connection with others

1.37 Knowledge Check Question 3

How do negative misconceptions about depression affect people with the condition?
(Select all that apply.)

Correct	Choice
Yes	Misconceptions prevent those suffering from the condition from seeking help.
Yes	Misconceptions cause people to fear they will be seen as weak or broken.
Yes	Misconceptions cause people to blame themselves when their loved ones develop depression.
Yes	Misconceptions can lead to people not recognizing the condition.

Feedback when correct:

That is correct. Misconceptions can cause all kinds of negative effects, including: Not recognizing the condition, causing people to fear they will be seen as weak or broken, preventing those suffering from the condition from seeking help, and causing people to blame themselves when they or their loved ones develop depression

Feedback when incorrect:

Not quite. Misconceptions can cause all kinds of negative effects, including: Not recognizing the condition, causing people to fear they will be seen as weak or broken, preventing those suffering from the condition from seeking help, and causing people to blame themselves when they or their loved ones develop depression

1.39 Knowledge Check Question 4

Which of the following statements is true about inpatient and outpatient treatment?



Correct	Choice
No	Both types of treatment are designed for those who show more severe symptoms and need constant medical supervision.
No	About 50% of depression is treated on an outpatient basis, while the other 50% is treated on an inpatient basis.
Yes	Inpatient treatment is generally best suited for those who have not shown significant progress from outpatient treatment.
No	Outpatient treatment takes place 24/7, while inpatient treatment occurs certain times of the week.

Feedback when correct:

That is correct. Outpatient treatment occurs during certain times of the week and is generally for those with less severe symptoms. Over 90% of depression is treated through outpatient treatment. Inpatient treatment, which takes place 24/7, is best suited for those who have not shown significant progress from outpatient treatment.

Feedback when incorrect:

That is correct. Outpatient treatment occurs during certain times of the week and is generally for those with less severe symptoms. Over 90% of depression is treated through outpatient treatment. Inpatient treatment, which takes place 24/7, is best suited for those who have not shown significant progress from outpatient treatment.

1.40 Knowledge Check Question 5

You have a friend who has been diagnosed with depression. She took medication for a while, but she could not handle the side effects, so she is not pursuing no treatment options. What might you recommend to this friend? (Select all that apply.)

Correct	Choice
Yes	Remind her that there are many different options for medications, and sometimes it takes a little time to find the right fit.
No	Encourage her to stick it out – it’s likely that the side effects will go away with time.

Yes	Suggest she make an appointment to see her healthcare provider to talk about different treatment options available.
Yes	Offer to pursue a self care activity with her, like exercising, volunteering, or visiting a local art center.

Feedback when correct:

That is correct. You can help someone you care about find the right medication by encouraging them to follow up with their doctor, or by reminding them that there are many different options and they don't have to keep one certain medication. You can always also offer to join the person in an activity that helps them pursue their own self care. Though this isn't directly related to medication, it is a helpful form of treatment that requires no prescription or appointment.

Feedback when incorrect:

Not quite. You can help someone you care about find the right medication by encouraging them to follow up with their doctor, or by reminding them that there are many different options and they don't have to keep one certain medication. You can always also offer to join the person in an activity that helps them pursue their own self care. Though this isn't directly related to medication, it is a helpful form of treatment that requires no prescription or appointment.