

Depression: Causes and Risk Factors

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The causes of depression are varied and complex. While some people can contribute their depression to a single cause, others may find that it is the result of several causes. Still, for some, the causes are never known. Below is a list of contributing factors that can either increase your risk of, or cause, depression (note that these are not listed in any particular order).

Anger turned inward - This can happen when we have the feeling that it is better for us to suffer in silence than offend someone else or make them angry.

Lack of assertiveness - We can get depressed if we end up doing things we do not want to do because we cannot or do not say no. We cannot and should not do everything.

Biological factors - These can include genetic influences or chemical imbalances, in which anti-depressants might help. For other conditions, medications can actually have depressive side effects.

Medical problems - Thyroid illness and other medical problems can cause depression. This can also include sleep problems and/or light deficiency. Consult with your physician about these possibilities.

Addictions - The use of addicting substances can increase your risk of depression, including benzodiazepines, alcohol, stimulants (cocaine, amphetamines), opiates, marijuana and others. Some people turn to alcohol and drugs to lessen their problems, but this only makes them worse.

Comparison to others - Comparing ourselves to others is very dangerous, since we are likely to view ourselves as inferior, or even a failure, when we do so.

Interpersonal connection or being socially withdrawn - We are social beings. Regular contact with others is healthy and part of who we are as humans. We especially need people we can turn to when times are challenging. Also, having marital or relationship problems can make you feel frustrated.

Poor modeling - We see our models growing up; we see their behaviors and we copy them. Therefore, we need to ask if we learned to be depressed by watching others. Those modeled patterns will continue unless we intentionally choose a different path.

Stress versus interpersonal support - Stress can cause unhealthy relationships, thus contributing to depression.

Poor diet and lack of exercise - Inactivity is depressing. Eating well and physical activity are natural anti-depressants and focusing aids. Also, practice good sleep hygiene.

Having excessive high expectations versus reality - When we have excessively high expectations for ourselves, our partners, our children, or our jobs, and when we do not meet our expectations, it can take an emotional toll on us.

Lack of humor or fun - We are all at risk of taking ourselves too seriously. If we are not finding or doing fun things each day, it can negatively affect us.

Lack of job satisfaction - We need to have a sense of being productive and having worth and value. Being trapped in a job we do not like can be depressive.

Financial stress or job loss - Financial strains, burdens and debt can wear on us emotionally and can result in an enormous amount of stress.

Deficits in our ability to find gratitude - This includes a lack of skills in seeking gratitude, thankfulness, contentment, satisfaction, joy and others.

Unresolved issues of grief and loss - It is not uncommon for bereaved individuals to become depressed. Holidays and anniversaries, in particular, serve as reminders of our loss, and many people experience a deepening of their grief at these times

Lack of meaning and purpose - We all need to have meaning and purpose in our lives.

Sense of being overwhelmed or defeated by life - We get dis-"courage" or come to lack courage or confidence or vision; this could have something to do with expectations, meaning and purpose, our values, or a number of things.

Trauma and abuse issues - Depression can some times point to a need to deal with and resolve past traumas.

Our values are not matching our actions - Sometimes we get caught up in doing things or pursuing things in life that are not consistent with what we truly believe is right and good.

Others - This could be any other contributor or anything going on uniquely with you, and not mentioned above.

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MyTherapySession.com is an online resource that provides hope and help to individuals with various emotional health concerns.

Through the use of web-based assessment tools and stepwise video learning modules with reflective journal prompts and selected (optional) spiritually sensitive observations, both consumers and healthcare providers can more efficiently and effectively address a variety of essential mental health concerns, including weight management, stress, anxiety and depression, self-esteem and goal setting, assertiveness, anger management, comprehensive addictions treatment, eating disorders, overcoming guilt and shame, and many more.