

# Depression Awareness

## Myths and Facts

**Myth:** Depression doesn't affect me.

**Fact:** In a survey by the American College Health Association, 30% of college students reported feeling “so depressed at some point in time that they have trouble functioning.”

**Myth:** Depression is not a real medical problem.

**Fact:** Depression is a real & serious condition, no different than diabetes or heart disease in its ability to impact someone's life. It can have both emotional and physical symptoms and make life very difficult for those who have it.

**Myth:** Depression is something that strong people can “snap out of” by thinking positively.

**Fact:** People with depression cannot just “snap out of it” any more than someone with diabetes can. Depression is not a choice or a sign of weakness and laziness; it is a health problem resulting from environmental and biological factors.

**Myth:** Depression will just go away on its own.

**Fact:** While for some people, depression may go away without treatment, this is not usually the case. Without treatment, symptoms of depression can continue for weeks, months, or even years.

**Myth:** Talking about depression only makes it worse.

**Fact:** It is easy to understand why some worry about discussing their depression, but being alone can be even more harmful. If you are

hesitant to talk with a close family member or friend, consider a faculty member, spiritual leader, or counselor.

Myth: Depression only happens when something bad happens in your life, such as a breakup, the death of a loved one, or failing an exam.

Fact: Depression is more than just having occasional sad thoughts. Depression can arise suddenly, even when things in life seem to be going well.

## College and Stress

### Sources of Stress

- Greater academic demands
- Balancing classes, work & social life.
- Being on your own in a new environment
- Changes in family relations
- Homesickness
- Financial responsibilities
- Changes in your social life
- Uncertainty about the future after college
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Exposure to new people, ideas, and temptations
- Preparing for life after graduation

### Ways of Coping

- Talk to a trusted family member or friend
- Exercise

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- Eat a balanced diet
- Get enough sleep
- Pay nature a visit
- Play with a pet
- Schedule a meeting with a counselor

## Symptoms of Depression

- Overwhelming sadness/ despair
- Hopelessness-"it's never going to get better"
- Physical aches and pains
- Loss of interest in activities
- Appetite changes
- Change in weight
- Fatigue
- Lack of motivation
- Sleep Disturbances
- Feeling guilty or worthless
- Low self-esteem
- Anxiety
- Trouble with concentration
- Thoughts of death or suicide

## Types of Depression

Bipolar Disorder: May experience alternating periods of depression and/or elevated mood (i.e. mania)

### *Depression*

- Times of sadness, decreased energy or motivation
- Loss of interest in activities once enjoyed, including sex
- Feeling tired or slowed down.
- Problems concentrating, remembering, and making decisions
- Restlessness or irritability
- Thinking of death or suicide or attempting suicide

### *Mania*

- Times of elevated mood or irritability
- Impulsive behavior
- Periods of feeling "high" or overly happy
- Talking fast/jumping from idea to idea
- Restlessness
- Sleeping little and not feeling tired
- Unrealistic beliefs in one's ability
- Engaging in high risk behaviors

## Seasonal Affective Disorder

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that typically occurs in the winter when daylight hours become shorter. S.A.D is thought to occur due to a lack of sunlight. S.A.D symptoms lessen when the season changes.

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### *You may have S.A.D. if:*

- You have been depressed during the same season for several years in a row and felt better after the season changed
- You crave carbs, gain weight and sleep more during the winter

### *Who is more Likely to experience S.A.D.?*

- People who live in areas where winter days are very short or there are big changes in the amount of daylight in different seasons.
- Women
- The risk of getting S.A.D for the first time goes down as you age.
- Family history of S.A.D

### *The Difference between S.A.D and Depression*

Sadness is a normal reaction in response to a loss or troubling situation. Sadness is temporary; *depression lasts longer and is more severe.*

Usually, one can experience relief from sadness when one has dealt with the situation or event that caused sadness. Depression doesn't go away after you've dealt with whatever has made you sad (e.g. someone close to you passing away).

### *What may increase your risk of depression?*

- Life stress (ex: financial, family, illness, loss of loved one)
- Lack of social support, isolation
- Family history of depression
- Traumatic brain injury
- Genetic/inherited traits or genes

### **Baby Blues – symptoms**

- Mood swings
- Anxiety

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- Feeling sad
- More easily upset/angered
- Short crying spells
- Can't concentrate
- Trouble sleeping

### Postpartum depression - symptoms

- Symptoms longer-lasting & more intense than the baby blues
- Severe mood swings
- Very tired/trouble sleeping
- More easily upset/angered
- Not wanting to be around friends/family
- Thoughts of harming yourself or your baby

### *Are you at increased risk for postpartum depression?*

- history of depression prior to pregnancy
- family history of depression or bipolar disorder
- other life stressors (pregnancy complications, sickness, job loss, financial problems)
- relationship issues
- lack of a support system

### *When should you get help?*

- If you're feeling bad for more than 2 weeks
- You're feeling worse instead of better
- Having a hard time caring for your baby
- Can't do your everyday activities
- Thoughts of harming yourself or your baby

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