

When Depression is Mild

At some time during the course of daily affairs, nearly every human being, young or old, experiences feelings of depression — sadness, discouragement, the blues. These are common, normal feelings that come and go — mild depressions that can be seasonal or event-related, or simply part of the warp and woof of life's cycle.

Depression becomes a depressive illness when symptoms intensify and persist over an extended period of time.

The good news is that depression can be treated; the sad news is that nearly two-thirds of depressed people don't get appropriate treatment. Even with all we know, some still believe depression is a personal fault or weakness, and that the person who is suffering could just "snap out of it" if he or she wanted to.

Like many other illnesses, denial that anything is wrong may be one reason help is not sought. Other times people don't seek help because they don't recognize the symptoms — in themselves or in others.

Following are some characteristics of depression and some dos and don'ts if you or someone you care about is experiencing mild depression.

Some Symptoms of Depression

- Persistent sad or "empty" feelings, feeling discouraged, blue or down.
- Negative feelings – feeling guilty, unworthy. Self-criticism or self-blame.
- Loss of interest in ordinary activities.
- Decreased energy, feeling fatigued, restless, irritable or lethargic.
- Increase or decrease of sleep, insomnia; awaking earlier or later than usual.

- Changes in appetite – eating more or less, gaining or losing weight.
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions.

If symptoms persist and the following additional symptoms appear, then professional help is needed.

- Excessive weeping or crying.
- Thoughts of suicide or death.
- Persistent physical symptoms such as headaches, chronic pain, digestive disorders.

When depression is mild, what should a person do?

Try to be with other people, especially supportive, understanding people. Go to movies or ballgames or other cultural or recreational activities that you have always liked. Participate in social activities or community gatherings. Do something physical — go for walks, take in the outdoors, work in the yard, plant some flowers. Try mild exercise.

Also, break large tasks into smaller ones; set priorities. Only do what you can and check your expectations of yourself. Talk about how you're feeling with friends and family.

If you feel like you need to talk to your therapist, by all means, do so.

What are things someone with depression should not do?

- Don't isolate or hide out.
- Don't set difficult goals or take on too much responsibility.
- Don't expect too much of yourself.
- Don't set your self up for disappointment or failure.

- Don't make major life decisions — changing jobs, getting married or divorced — without first consulting with others who know you well and have a more objective view of your situation.
- Don't expect to suddenly get over the depression. Mostly likely feeling better will happen gradually.
- Don't accept negative thinking and feelings as reflecting your true situation.

When these symptoms last more than a few weeks or if a person's mood becomes too depressed, there may be a question about the severity of the depression. Professional help may be the next step.



Expressive Therapy Center

301.869.1017 and 703.349.5225

info@expressivetherapycenter.com