

Depressed youth

Often, we hear about depression or say that someone is depressed without being aware of its meaning. In this article I would like to talk about different types of depression and list some of them because they are generic, which means they can be applied to more people. Ultimately, each person knows what is happening to them and it's not always the same for everyone.

Depression together with anxiety is a mental disorder most common among youth, typically between 15 and 26 years of age. Its characteristics are sadness, loss of interest, low self-esteem, sleep and eating disorders, feeling tired and difficulties concentrating, among others. According to WHO, depression is currently the leading cause of disability worldwide, accounting for more than 7% of premature mortality in Europe.

It's important to understand that depression is not a mood, depression doesn't equal feeling sad. Many people use the expression 'I'm depressed' to say that they are sad, but we have to be careful because it's not the same. Depression is a serious mental illness and as such requires treatment and a period of time (depending on the type of depression) to recover.

Not a lot of people pay attention to it, but it can become chronic or recurrent, hinder academic and work performance and the ability to deal with everyday life. In more serious cases it can lead to suicide.

Types of depression:

Major depressive disorder

This one is the most habitual and comes with the worst symptoms: apathy, lack of mobility, melancholy and loss of appetite. Negative thoughts can occur, such as that they can't continue living and be cured, and often they have a feeling that they are going to lose everything. Without becoming delusions of a psychotic disorder, these recurring ideas are what paralyzes the person.

Dysthymia

This type of depression is chronic, although it isn't as intense as a major depressive disorder. Anxiety is present, alongside with emotional highs and lows, lack of sense of humor, low self-esteem and difficulties coping with it and moving forward. It could take months or years before the person becomes conscious again.

Depressive anxiety disorder

Another quite common disorder is the depressive anxiety disorder which is a mix of those two issues. Usually it is developed due to family or work-related issues and it has a good prognosis.

Atypical depression

In atypical depression the symptoms we find are reversed compared to the common ones, in this case increased appetite and hours of sleep. It is similar to the last one, because it is normally triggered by certain situations.

Asthenia

In the changes of seasons, especially in spring, what is known as asthenia appears. It is something that is linked to the changes in the hours of sunshine. It produces something like post-vacation depression. Changes in the natural body rhythm result in excess fatigue and a feeling of mild depression. It usually does not require any treatment.

Cyclothymia

In cyclothymia we see altered moods, changes in behavior without apparent reasons and without causes. It is a manifestation of an internal problem. We need to be careful not to confuse cyclothymia with a bipolar disorder, which is something much more serious, where there are not only mood swings, but also mania, hyperactivity, irritation and irrational thoughts.

Causes of depression:

Depression doesn't have a single cause. Important factors that need to be taken into consideration involve genetics, environment, general health, some traumatic events such as the death of a loved one and certain thought patterns. When it comes to adolescents, it is believed that in addition to the hormonal changes typical of this age, the stress caused by the maturation process and the conflicts of forming one's own identity together with the acquisition of independence play a role in the appearance of depressions.

We shouldn't forget the economic and social situation in which we are living right now. They've already nicknamed us 'the lost generation' before, so now they can add the consequences Covid-19 is going to leave on us to understand our mental health. We can add lack of social life to the difficulties of finding a job.

Social media also has an enormous impact, probably the greatest, on the lives of adolescents and young people. A life based on posting your experiences on Instagram rather than living them, constantly comparing yourself with other accounts on Instagram that make you feel more and more depressed and competitive because you are under the impression that everyone's lives are happy and perfect except yours. A generation that doesn't have time to read a book, but spends 3 consecutive hours on Instagram, a generation that doesn't

have money for therapy, but spends money on Nike shoes, a generation that promotes individualism and ridicules empathy and healthy relationships.

Symptoms of depression:

There are many various symptoms but the most common ones in adolescents are:

- ❖ Constant tiredness and lack of energy.
- ❖ Difficulties concentrating.
- ❖ Changes in the appetite – generally a decrease, but in some cases, it results in an increase.
- ❖ Irritability.
- ❖ Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities.
- ❖ Feelings of self-contempt.
- ❖ Sadness.
- ❖ Self-harm or suicide thoughts.
- ❖ Changes in the sleep pattern.
- ❖ Decrease in academic performance.
- ❖ Appearance of challenging attitudes.
- ❖ Distancing from friends and family.
- ❖ Drugs or alcohol consumption.

How to deal with someone who has depression?

First of all, to know how to handle someone who is depressed we need to know if the person has depression or they are just feeling down. We all have bad days and it is normal, sadness is a feeling like happiness and as such it shouldn't be repressed, it tells us something is wrong and in need of change.

Each and every person is different, just as every mental disorder is different. Therefore, the way of support needs to be individual and adjusted to the specific needs of each person.

'One size fits all' approach is not useful.

Everyone requires treatment based on respect, equality and trust in their abilities. Respecting their own characteristics, paying attention and giving importance to their ideas.

- ❖ Respect the privacy of their mental health problem, if the person wants to talk about it, LISTEN carefully, without judgment.
- ❖ Avoid authoritarian behavior.
- ❖ Avoid paternal and overprotective attitude.
- ❖ Do not use phrases such as 'cheer up', 'it happens to many people' or 'I'm sure it's nothing'.
- ❖ Do not show pity for their situation.
- ❖ Do not minimize their feelings.

- ❖ Avoid blaming them for lack of motivation, energy of interest in things because it might be provoked by the disorder or a side-effect of the medication.
- ❖ Try not to infantilize the conversation or other situations that could occur.
- ❖ Don't judge, offer space for a response, do not respond ahead of time, etc.

What if I'm the one suffering from depression?

Ask for help, you are not alone.

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