

Depression and Personality Dysfunction: An Integrative Functional Domains Perspective

Hi, I'm Dr. Craig Sawchuk, a clinical psychologist at Mayo Clinic. And I'm here to talk with you about depression. Whether you're looking for answers for yourself, a friend, or loved one, understanding the basics of depression can help you take the next step.

Depression is a mood disorder that causes feelings of sadness that won't go away. Unfortunately, there's a lot of stigma around depression. Depression isn't a weakness or a character flaw. It's not about being in a bad mood, and people who experience depression can't just snap out of it. Depression is a common, serious, and treatable condition. If you're experiencing depression, you're not alone. It honestly affects people of all ages and races and biological sexes, income levels and educational backgrounds. Approximately one in six people will experience a major depressive episode at some point in their lifetime, while up to 16 million adults each year suffer from clinical depression. There are many types of symptoms that make up depression. Emotionally, you may feel sad or down or irritable or even apathetic. Physically, the body really slows down. You feel tired. Your sleep is often disrupted. It's really hard to get yourself motivated. Your thinking also changes. It can just be hard to concentrate. Your thoughts tend to be much more negative. You can be really hard on yourself, feel hopeless and helpless about things. And even in some cases, have thoughts of not wanting to live. Behaviorally, you just want to pull back and withdraw from others, activities, and day-to-day responsibilities. These symptoms all work together to keep you trapped in a cycle of depression. Symptoms of depression are different for everyone. Some symptoms may be a sign of another disorder or medical condition. That's why it's important to get an accurate diagnosis.

While there's no single cause of depression, most experts believe there's a combination of biological, social, and psychological factors that contribute to depression risk. Biologically, we think about genetics or a family history of depression, health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease or thyroid disorders, and even hormonal changes that happen over the lifespan, such as pregnancy and menopause. Changes in brain chemistry, especially disruptions in neurotransmitters like serotonin, that play an important role in regulating many bodily functions, including mood, sleep, and appetite, are thought to play a particularly important role in depression. Socially stressful and traumatic life events, limited access to resources such as food, housing, and health care, and a lack of social support all contribute to depression risk. Psychologically, we think of how negative thoughts and problematic coping behaviors, such as avoidance and substance use, increase our vulnerability to depression.

The good news is that treatment helps. Effective treatments for depression exist and you do have options to see what works best for you. Lifestyle changes that improve sleep habits, exercise, and address underlying health conditions can be an important first step. Medications such as antidepressants can be helpful in alleviating depressive symptoms. Therapy, especially cognitive behavioral therapy, teaches skills to better manage negative thoughts and improve coping behaviors to help break you out of cycles of depression. Whatever the cause, remember that depression is not your fault and it can be treated.

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To help diagnose depression, your health care provider may use a physical exam, lab tests, or a mental health evaluation. These results will help identify various treatment options that best fit your situation.

Help is available. You don't have to deal with depression by yourself. Take the next step and reach out. If you're hesitant to talk to a health care provider, talk to a friend or loved one about how to get help. Living with depression isn't easy and you're not alone in your struggles. Always remember that effective treatments and supports are available to help you start feeling better. Want to learn more about depression? Visit [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org). Do take care.

Reference

[Essentials of Writing Biomedical Research Papers \(Family Medicine\)](#)

[Convivial Toolbox: Generative Research for the Front End of Design](#)