

Situational Depression

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Most people experience situational depression at least once in their lives – and probably more. It's a short-term type of depression that may happen after a particularly traumatic event such as drastic changes in your lifestyle including divorce, loss of a job, death in the family or of a close friend and retirement.

When it becomes difficult to adjust to the changes taking place, depression may take over and the person with situational depression might show symptoms similar to other types of depression – including clinical depression.

The way these two types of depression are treated very differently because of some key differences involved. Situations which overpower our ability to cope – such as surviving a major disaster, accident or major illness – can put us in a tailspin of depression.

Inability to cope usually fosters other symptoms such as anger, irritability, insomnia or getting too much sleep and more. You need to understand the differences between situational and other types of depression and learn to recognize symptoms so you can be diagnosed and treated properly.

Causes of Situational Depression

You may have experienced or know someone who has experienced bouts of depression after a major life event or changes that make it difficult to cope. Whereas in clinical depression, people have definite chemical imbalances in the brain – in situational depression the symptoms are brought on by certain situations in their lives.

Research indicates that adults and adolescents alike will have the symptoms of situational depression at some point in their lives. And the problem is growing with the amount of stress that builds in our lives.

Problems in a relationship, loss or layoff of a job or even little setbacks can add up to bouts of situational depression. Coping skills are sometimes inadequate for getting through these times without feeling sadness, remorse, fear or hopelessness.

Unlike coping with a major depressive disorder, situational depression is only temporary and disappears after a person adapts or comes to grips with the situation. Some doctors and researchers refer to situational depression as an “adjustment disorder” instead of labeling it real depression.

Even though situational depression may go away after a few weeks or months, it shouldn't be ignored. Situational depression can easily morph into a major depressive disorder if not addressed and treated appropriately.

If you think you may be depressed following a particularly distressing or stressful event in your life and can't seem to cope with everyday life demands, talk to your doctor about the problem, what you're experiencing and find a solution to get you through the dark days.

Diagnosis and Treatments for Situational Depression

When a severely depressed person visits a doctor for the problem, the doctor will attempt to discern which type of depression the person has. If the person has recently experienced a devastating or grief-filled time in his life, the doctor will seek relief for the situation by prescribing a medication for a brief period of time or by recommending counseling or some other form of treatment.

Most times, you'll develop the symptoms of situational depression within about 90 days from the triggering event. Tell your healthcare provider about the past event and let him or her know what you're feeling.

For example, listlessness, sleep problems, sadness, periods of prolonged crying, unfounded anxiety, excessive worrying, trouble concentrating and withdrawal from social activities and interactions with family and friends

are all symptoms you should tell your doctor about so he can make the correct diagnosis.

The doctor must then determine if the depression originated from the traumatic event and is temporary in nature or has developed into a more serious, major depressive disorder.

If the doctor thinks you have severe situational depression, he may prescribe anti-depressants or anti-anxiety drugs to help combat the symptoms and help you function in your daily life.

Adjustment disorder is a form of situational depression which exhibits a group of symptoms – sadness, weight loss or gain, sleep problems and more. You may be having a difficult time coping with the change that has occurred in your life and need help to solve the problem.

To reach a diagnosis of situational depression the doctor will ask about past events you may have experienced that could have triggered the depression. Be sure to convey if you've been ill, had difficulties with school or work, experienced the death of a friend or loved one, moved to a different location or are involved with relationship problems.

You may also need to have a full psychological evaluation to be sure your symptoms aren't caused by another mental disorder such as PTSD, chemical disorder of the brain, hormonal changes or something else that needs treatment.

If the doctor diagnoses you with situational depression he may recommend dopamine reuptake blockers such as bupropion or SSRIs (selective serotonin uptake inhibitors) such as sertraline (Zoloft) and Citalopram (Celexa).

If the depression isn't deemed severe enough for medication, the doctor may recommend supportive psychotherapy to help you develop the coping mechanisms needed to deal with the depression.

Coping skills are vitally important to healing from situational depression because it helps you avoid or be able to cope with future types of situations that might trigger depression symptoms again.

CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) is another form of treatment a doctor may recommend. This treatment can help you recognize your symptoms and address them with the coping skills you need.

The doctor, along with the patient, should carefully monitor a patient to make sure the medication and alternative treatments are working. If suicidal thoughts occur, the doctor should be consulted immediately.

Recognizing the Symptoms of Situational Depression

Common symptoms of situational depression include low mood most of the time, hopelessness and continuous and unstoppable crying. A child may exhibit symptoms of situational depression by going from a good student to one that skips school, gets in trouble or receives lower grades than normal.

Other symptoms may include stomachaches or headaches for no discernable reason, heart palpitations, insomnia or sleeping too much, changes in diet or eating habits, nervousness, not going to work or school and changes in social activities.

Symptoms might also manifest themselves as extreme fatigue or abuse of alcohol or drugs. These symptoms may also be symptoms of other, physical, illnesses so your doctor will likely run a series of psychological tests to be sure you're not suffering from a more serious disorder like major depression, PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) or a physical disease.

If you're not usually the type of person to have low moods or any of the other symptoms of depression, you may be suffering from situational depression. Think back over the past few weeks or months and remember situations or losses that may be the trigger for your feelings of depression.

Suffering the loss of a loved one, relationship issues, loss of job and other troublesome events by exhibiting symptoms of depression is normal, but these feelings shouldn't be suppressed.

Lack of help for your situational depression may result in your normal feelings turning into a serious depressive disorder. Don't ignore symptoms of situational depression such as loss of interest in activities you once found pleasurable or inability to concentrate or function properly on a daily basis.

Also think about other factors that may be triggering your depression such as side effects of drugs or alcohol, infections like mononucleosis, viral hepatitis or AIDS, menstrual disorder or diagnosis of cancer or rheumatoid arthritis

A nutritional deficiency such as B6 or B12 and neurological occurrences such as Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis or recent stroke may also be symptoms of situational depression.

Tips for Managing Situational Depression

Aside from the actual symptoms of situational depression, one of the most troublesome feelings of the disorder is the sense of helplessness you feel. Feeling as if you have no control or power can be even more depressing.

That's why learning as much as you can about the disorder will serve you well in helping to cope with the symptoms. Although professional intervention is usually required to gain full control over the disorder, there are some methods you can use to help you take control once again.

Know your medications so you can be aware of side effects and other medications you should avoid. Try to recognize what may trigger a depressive symptom. For example, if certain friends or coworkers can change your mood from great to down, avoid interaction if you can.

Learn and practice coping skills. How to rid your brain of negative thoughts and replace them with positive ones can help tremendously as well as keeping you on the right track for a complete recovery.

Read self-help books from reputable physicians and therapists and seek help from websites and blogs. This and other support lines you can connect with may help you discover unknown ways to help yourself cope with depression.

Healthy diet choices and exercise are imperative in dealing with any type of depression. When you neglect your health, your entire system will become imbalanced – so hit the gym and make changes to your diet if needed.

Avoid alcohol and drugs. Any or all of these substances won't make your depression better as sometimes thought. In fact, they may tend to make the symptoms worse. Keep in mind that they may also interact negatively with whatever medications the doctor prescribed.

Break a bad habit. Changing your life in any way from negative to positive helps you overcome symptoms of depression. For example, if you were smoking, take steps to quit. Switch up old habits and do something new or engage in that hobby you always wanted to try.

Create a routine for yourself that works. Planning ahead takes the anxiety out of situations that might otherwise feel stressful. Hang out with positive and upbeat friends and family rather than isolating yourself. They can be a source of encouragement and support during the dark times.

Best Natural Remedies for Situational Depression

When your emotions are imbalanced, there are some natural remedies worth trying to get back on track. Research has proven that many cases of short and long-term depression is due to a lack of B vitamins.

Vitamin B6 and folic acid can help regulate the depressive symptoms and may even increase the efficiency of your prescriptions such as anti-depressants and anti-anxiety medications.

The herbal remedy St. John's Wort has long been the choice of many for treating mood and depressive disorders. Don't take St. John's Wort if

you're already taking birth control pills, antidepressant medications or retroviral medications because of possible dangerous interactions.

Fish oil containing omega-3 fatty acids is a supplement also known to maintain mind efficiency. Fish oil contains the essential fatty acid, DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), which is present in the nerve and brain tissues.

SAMe is believed to relieve symptoms of depression faster than St. John's Wort. Be sure to only take the enteric-coated capsules or tablets in the form of butanedisulfonate and take it on an empty stomach.

Just like alcohol and drugs, caffeine can interfere with depressive symptoms. Cut down or completely avoid all forms of caffeine. Acupuncture may also be considered a natural remedy for mood and depressive disorders.

If you experience situational depression for more than six months, consult a mental health professional or grief counselor who can help you get to the root of your situational depression and lead you to a full recovery.

Remember that there are numerous ways to lessen feelings of depression. Try some natural methods along with your doctor's recommendation until you find one that works well for you.

There is a method that will work for you. The worst thing you can do is to ignore the symptoms and let them morph into an even worse depressive disorder that could change your life drastically – and forever.

Finally, you are able to choose another response to what life has dealt you. Try not to let depression get the best of the joy you can experience today. Break free of those downward-spiraling emotions by choosing a different and more uplifting response.



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