



Emotional Wealth Secrets

Recognising Depression

True depression is not the same thing as normal sadness. The expression "I'm so depressed" is overused and misused, and tends to undermine just how debilitating a condition real depression can be.

Depression is a serious illness. Being depressed is like living under a black cloud that never lifts where all joy and hope is gone. Nothing is fun and nothing means anything. Your emotions are dulled and you can't respond normally to the people who love and care about you. Your relationships and your job fall apart – it doesn't matter much to you. It's all you can do to drag yourself out of bed each day, and sometimes you can't even do that. You couldn't care less if you live or die.

It is important to make the distinction between sadness and depression, and to also acknowledge that it is rare for normal sadness to lead to depression. Normal sadness occurs, for example, when something disastrous happens and you experience a great loss. The normal human response is grief, which is intense, and can last weeks or months, but eventually has a resolution. We do not call this depression.

Also in life there is disappointment. None of us is as good as we wish and life doesn't deliver us everything. We struggle with our relationships and with our work and can become very disappointed about things not achieved or the difficulties we face. This also is not depression.

Relentless stress however, can lead to depression due to the ongoing accumulation of the stress chemical adrenalin in your system. As the levels of adrenalin rise in your body (and you begin to feel more and more uptight) your levels of serotonin begin to deplete. Serotonin is a chemical required by your brain to maintain your feelings of well-being and to assist your thinking. Note that you think the best when you are feeling good! Depression is known to be an imbalance of these chemicals. It is not a weakness and it is nothing to be ashamed about. It is an illness that can be treated, and medication restores these chemicals to their proper balance so that you feel better and think better! When you are depressed your thinking becomes inaccurate and irrational, you dwell on things (ruminating thought) and as a result, it is common for anxiety to escalate and for self-esteem to decline.

Depression is often triggered by major events such as the death of a relative or close friend. Stressful situations such as divorce or separation, loss of a job, financial difficulties can also lead to depression, as can loneliness, especially in the elderly. Simply the accumulation of stressful life events can have the same result, for example, planning your wedding while doing full time work, being injured in a car accident, a parent being hospitalized, and having your wallet stolen, all within a period of a few weeks.

For women, depression can be associated with the birth of a child. For some, there might not even seem to be a reason for the way they are feeling. Whatever the cause, a person suffers with this illness and it is important to recognize they cannot just "snap out of it".

Any of the following may be part of a depressive illness:

- Feeling sad, crying easily
- Sleep disturbance
- Changes in appetite and weight
- Loss of interest and motivation
- Loss of energy and becoming easily fatigued
- Physical aches and pains, especially headache or abdominal pain
- Loss of sexual interest, impotence
- Feeling that life is not worth living
- Feelings of helplessness
- Guilt, and self-reproaching thoughts
- Pessimism regarding the future
- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Confusion, poor memory
- Alcohol or drug abuse

Treatment

It is important to note that many stressed people do not get depressed, so there is not an automatic consequence of depression if life is tough for a while. Stress is known to increase the risk of depression, but there are other risk factors – a genetic predisposition, unhelpful personal coping skills, and most of all, feeling disconnected.

Treatment depends on several factors – the severity of your illness, what types of symptoms you have and for how long you've had them. For some, counselling and learning cognitive techniques to alter negative thinking is sufficient for a person to begin to recover. Others need to engage in activities and do something (eg, volunteer work, find part-time work) in order to find a feeling of connection and purpose. For others, anti-depressant medication is a good option, and should be discussed with a doctor. Usually on medication, a person will begin to feel better within two to three weeks after starting treatment, and find it easier to cope with his/her day-to-day routines. A combination of medication and counselling is considered the preferred option.

Dr. Mike and Karen Gosling welcome you to Gosling International and The Emotional Wealth Academy. Please visit <http://www.easequadrant.com> to learn how to improve your mood, understand the cause of your feelings, and feel better than you do. You know, it's never been easier to choose emotional health! Would you like to "hang out" with two experts in emotions every month and use their 30+ years of experience in building emotional wealth to stay well and create the relationships of your dreams? We'll teach you how to become emotionally wealthy step-by-step in our special advanced mentoring program... Join us now as a Premium Member at www.emotionalwealthacademy.com.