

Depression and Addiction Examined

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Depression is defined as a mental disorder, characterized by a persistently depressed mood and/or loss of interest in activities, causing significant impairment in daily life. It is said that one-third of people with major depression also face a substance abuse issue. The World Health Organization says that worldwide 300 million people suffer from depression.

When a person has a mental health issue plus an addiction problem, it is called a "dual diagnosis" or "comorbidity." When people are depressed, it may be difficult to do the normal things that most people do. Things like getting out of bed and getting ready for the day can be extremely difficult for someone with depression. It could feel like you have something weighing you down both physically and mentally. Your thoughts start to betray you and you develop extremely low self-esteem and confidence. Being able to walk out of the door every morning is a major accomplishment, especially when someone is in a depressed state of mind.

Depression can devastate someone's life. It could lead to feelings such as a sense of impending doom. This is reported by many people who battle depression. It is very common for people who have depression or other mental illnesses to self-medicate. Sometimes people are depressed because they are drinking and they are drinking because they are depressed. It's a vicious cycle that many people face daily.

With depression, people stop doing activities they once loved and withdraw from friends and family. Most people who suffer from depression often isolate.

So many of us are living our lives full of anxiety, depression and mania, simply because we are undiagnosed. That is the reason many addicts started using in the first place and that leads to the endless cycle of addiction.

For the most part, it doesn't matter whether you're on stimulants or depressants because both can trigger depression. It doesn't matter if it's alcohol, cocaine or amphetamines. They all lead to depression. We need to be aware of this.

We need to develop an understanding of how our brains work and how to recognize signs and symptoms before they get out of control. You then will be informed and have the skills to deal with your feelings and emotions.

Drinking and/or doing drugs can increase the risk of depression. Substance abuse can trigger feelings of loneliness, sadness, and hopelessness, that are often associated with depression. While most people will experience highs and lows throughout their life, it is different in people with clinical depression. Major depression can last for weeks,

months, and sometimes years. It can interfere with a person's entire life, including their ability to work and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

For those suffering with depression, drugs and alcohol may appear to be an easy solution to their problem. Substances will temporarily subside any emotional pain and bring a sense of relief.

However, these substances can be addicting. As we consume more, the more dependent we become on them, and our tolerance increases. Over time, substance abuse can intensify symptoms of depression and also lead to health problems like brain damage.

There are 9 forms of depression:

- Major Depression
- Persistent Depressive Disorder
- Bipolar Disorder
- Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)
- Psychotic Depression
- Postpartum Depression
- Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder
- Situational Depression

Symptoms of depression can vary depending on the type. People with depression face an uphill battle every day. Many components of depression overlap with the signs of addiction, making it essential that people get the appropriate care and treatment for both disorders.

Both depression and addiction can cause a person to:

- Give up social activities/ hobbies
- Refuse to acknowledge a problem
- Experience issues with personal
- Relationships
- Isolate from others

For someone suffering from depression, it can be tempting to want to ease those feelings with drugs and alcohol. Abusing substances to ease depression can cause additional harm to an individual's life, from financial issues to personal hardships.

People suffering from depression have approximately a 10% lifetime suicide risk. When combined with substance abuse, the suicide risk rises to 25%.

Common Depression Symptoms:

- Loss of interest in work, hobbies
- and personal goals
- Feelings of useless, hopeless and pessimistic
- Irritability
- Trouble concentrating
- Sleeping issues (too much or too little)
- Changes in appetite or weight (increase or decrease)

Most people facing depression may struggle with one or more of these common symptoms at some point in their life. Symptoms can vary depending on the type of depression. But for people with severe types of depression, symptoms can be extremely dangerous or even life-threatening.

Symptoms Of Severe Depression:

- Suicidal Thoughts
- Hallucinations or delusions
- Reckless behavior
- Using Drugs and Alcohol to cope with depression

There are several ways that medical providers diagnose depression. There are a few tests that may be completed in order to pinpoint exactly the type of depression and determine the proper treatment. A physical exam is necessary to check underlying health conditions that may be linked to the patient's depression. The doctor will evaluate the patient's overall health. Lab tests can eliminate a variety of health conditions that could be contributing to depression symptoms. A complete blood count or thyroid test will ensure that different parts of the body are functioning correctly.

Medical or mental health providers may have patients complete a questionnaire to learn more about their thoughts, symptoms and feelings. The information provided helps doctors form a proper diagnosis and will aid in determining the correct treatment.