

**2012, It May Not Be Your Personality:
They Could Be Symptoms of Depression
By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.**

It May Not Be Your Personality: They Could Be Symptoms of Depression

By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

Countless people who exhibit symptoms of depression are unaware that they are depressed. They may identify themselves as "the kind of person who" is characteristically unhappy, lazy, introverted, or unmotivated. Many of the "personality characteristics" that have internalized as part of their self-concept may actually be symptoms of depression. When "depressed mood" seems to wax and wane in intensity and frequency, it would be easy to assume that it is some unique personality feature. Failed attempts to "snap out of it" may further reinforce this notion. However, most of the time, a depression diagnosis should be ruled out.

Common symptoms of depression that may be self-interpreted as "personality characteristics" include some of the following:

Intermittent or prolonged bouts of sad, depressed mood, where motivation is lacking, where everything that happens seems to be interpreted through a "negative" lens, where withdrawal and isolation is preferred over the company of people you care about, and where you seem to be more impatient and intolerant of others. There is an air of pessimism, and possibly a sense of foreboding. People often interpret some of these symptoms as "self-pity" or feeling sorry for oneself.

When you feel this way, it may feel as if you have always felt this way, and always will feel this way. A sense of hopelessness, helplessness, and worthlessness is often present. It may be difficult to experience positive feelings, have fun, or enjoy things that you usually like to do. It can be difficult to find something to look forward to, even when things you usually enjoy are planned for the near future.

Guilt can morph into shame, further (driving) the sense that the problem is your inadequacy and incompetence. Shame is that sense of "less than", "not good enough" and "worth-less-ness", that tells you that no matter what you do you will never be good enough. Self-perception of worthlessness and inability to experience "happiness" reinforce each other as well as negative views of others and the future. Combined together these reinforce a negative pattern of cognitive distortions that color all incoming information, which is self-reinforcing in a circular way. It can create and/or reinforce the

**2012, It May Not Be Your Personality:
They Could Be Symptoms of Depression
By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.**

www.peggyferguson.com

www.stillwatermarriagecounselor.com

<https://sites.google.com/site/honeyjarcouplescommunication/>

www.howtoovercomeholidaystressanddepression.wordpress.com

<https://sites.google.com/site/holidaystressanddepression/>

**2012, It May Not Be Your Personality:
They Could Be Symptoms of Depression**
By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

notion that you are not only incapable of happiness, but non-deserving of it as well. Poor self-worth, coupled with helplessness, further entrench depression, as you settle in to accepting that this is just the way it is.

These factors combine to create an attitude of misery that further dampens any desire to get out and about as you drop one by one the things that you used to enjoy. Fatigue, along with body aches and pains, may also play roles in letting up on activities and socializing. Not only have you lost interest in the things you used to do, you have no energy to do those things even if you did want to. Some people experience a level of depression to the point where they are totally immobilized in their lives. Many can't manage basic self-care like cooking, hygiene, or engaging in any exercise at all.

Many people with depression experience difficulty with concentration, focusing, and paying attention. Many are indecisive, with inability to make the most routine of decisions. Short term memory can be affected. You may have a difficult time keeping track of items frequently used or needed, only to later discover them in an obvious place. Sleeping difficulties--whether it is difficulty getting to sleep, staying asleep, or sleeping too much--are also symptoms of depression. Change of appetite--up or down--may also be symptoms of depression.

Recurrent thoughts of death can be a symptom of depression. Suicidal thoughts

(regardless of whether you have a plan or an intention to follow through) are an indication of severe depression and the need to take action immediately to get help for your depression. If you have symptoms of depression, you would be well advised to meet with a counselor and/or your medical doctor regarding your symptoms and a possible diagnosis and treatment of depression.



<http://www.peggyferguson.com>

**2012, It May Not Be Your Personality:
They Could Be Symptoms of Depression**
By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

www.peggyferguson.com

www.stillwatermarriagecounselor.com

<https://sites.google.com/site/honeyjarcouplescommunication/>

www.howtoovercomeholidaystressanddepression.wordpress.com

<https://sites.google.com/site/holidaystressanddepression/>