

What is Depression? **By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.**

Depression is labeled as a “mood disorder”. As many as 20% of the population has experienced depression at some point in their lives. Some people tend to be more predisposed to depression than others. Some people are thought to have a biochemical imbalance that creates their depression. Depression is also believed to run in families.

Depression can occur at any time in a person’s life. It may start while he or she is a child. It may occur for the first time in adulthood. If you have one episode of depression, you are likely to have another episode during your lifetime.

Many people do not know that they are depressed and only identify that what they have experienced for much of their lives was depression, as they are recovering from it. People often equate the down, “blue” or depressed mood as depression. There are actually a number of symptoms that be manifested. Below are some symptoms of depression. You don’t have to have all these symptoms to be diagnosed as depressed. If you do identify that you have several of these symptoms, you would be well advised to check it out with your doctor or mental health provider. There is effective treatment for depression.

Symptoms:

- Depressed, sad mood, or “the blues”
- Loss of interest in things you used to like to do
- Difficulty with experiencing joy or having fun
- Fatigue, tiredness, or low energy,
- Change in appetite
- Sleep disturbances, difficulties with getting to sleep, staying asleep, or sleeping during the day
- Anxiety, fidgety, nervous tension, listless, desire to run away
- Difficulty concentrating, focusing or paying attention
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Feelings of inadequacy, incompetence, or helplessness
- Feelings of hopelessness and despair,
- Short term memory problems
- Suicidal thoughts

If you have several of these symptoms, you should be screened or assessed for depression. There are also medical problems and medication issues that can look like depression. If you are depressed, you don’t have to “just live with it”, there are effective treatments for depression. Most people, despite the misguided advice to “snap out of it”, so need some help to begin to recover.