

Mental Health Awareness, Part 6

Understanding Depression



Shizuoka City Mental Health Center

What is Depression?

Feeling "down" or "blue" is something we all experience from time to time. Usually, these feelings improve with time. However, when these feelings become severe, persist for a long time, and start to interfere with daily life, it may be a sign of depression.

Depression affects about one in fifteen people over their lifetime, meaning anyone can develop this illness. It's often described as a "brain disease" caused by an imbalance of neurotransmitters in the brain. The good news is that it can be effectively treated with proper care.

As symptoms and effective treatment differ per person, it's important to find the right treatment for you.

Common Symptoms of Depression

Psychological Symptoms

- Persistent sadness or feeling down
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities
- Anxiety, restlessness, or irritability
- Difficulty concentrating, disorganized thoughts, forgetfulness



- Lack of motivation or energy
- Avoiding social interactions
- Self-criticism or pessimistic thoughts
- Suicidal thoughts

Physical Symptoms

- Insomnia
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite, weight loss etc.
- Headaches, dizziness, or ringing in the ears
- Dry mouth, loss of taste
- Heart palpitations, shortness of breath
- Stiff shoulders, back pain
- Stomach pain, constipation, diarrhea
- Frequent urination, reduced sex drive, irregular menstruation, etc.



Causes of Depression

Depression can have a variety of causes:

Personality Traits

- Being serious or conscientious
- Paying close attention to detail
- Having a strong sense of responsibility
- Perfectionism, etc.

Major Stress or Changes in Environment

Even positive changes to one's environment can cause stress.

- Financial problems
- Family issues
- Challenges at work or school
- Friendship and relationship problems, etc.
- Loss of a loved one
- Marriage, pregnancy, childbirth
- Graduation, starting a new job, getting promoted

Illness and Changes to Health

Depression can be caused by illness or medication.

- Brain conditions such as stroke, or thyroid conditions
- Certain medications, such as steroids or interferon
- Bodily and hormonal changes (e.g. pregnancy, childbirth, menstruation, menopause)
- Mineral deficiencies (e.g. iron, zinc)
- Long-term excessive alcohol consumption, etc.



There are many different types of depression.

- Do you feel better when something good happens? → It could be atypical depression.
- Do you have periods of high energy → It could be depression within bipolar disorder.
- Have you had frequent interpersonal issues since childhood? → It could be depression associated with a developmental disorder.
- Do you snore? → It could be depression caused by sleep apnea, etc.

For more information

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Treatment for Depression



The core components of treating depression

are "rest and environmental adjustments," "medication," and "psychotherapy."

Depression often involves a cycle of improvement and regression, but recovery gradually occurs over time.

Medication

Antidepressants help balance the neurotransmitters in the brain. It's said that it takes about two weeks for their effects to begin showing. Even if symptoms improve, stopping medication too soon can lead to a relapse, so it's crucial to continue taking it for a while. In some cases, sleep aids, anti-anxiety medications, or antipsychotics may also be used.

Rest and Environmental Adjustments

Giving your body and mind plenty of rest is essential. It is also important to receive the understanding of those around you and adjust your environment to reduce stress.

Psychotherapy

Common approaches include Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Interpersonal Therapy. These therapies help you understand the stressors that triggered your depression, teach coping strategies, and aim to maintain stability and prevent relapse. The appropriate therapy should be determined in consultation with your therapist.

Other Treatments

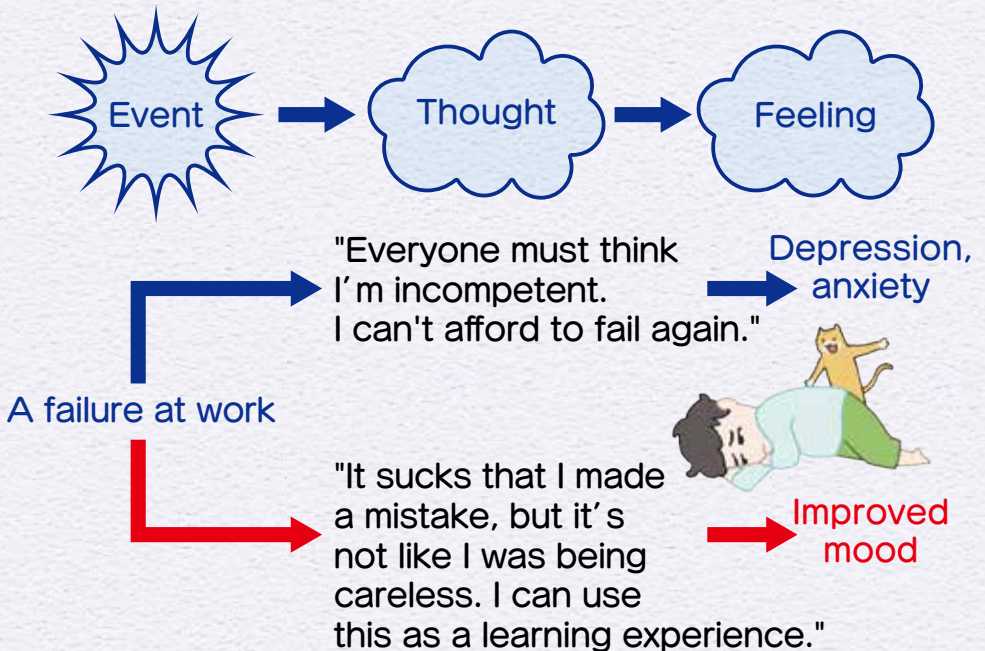
In addition to the above, treatments such as exercise therapy, modified electroconvulsive therapy, high-intensity light therapy, and transcranial magnetic stimulation are also available.

What is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)?

CBT helps you review and change thoughts and behaviors associated with depression and anxiety, so you can act according to your goals and values. During severe depressive periods, the focus is on medication and rest. CBT is applied after you have recovered from the severe phase and regained the ability to think and act.

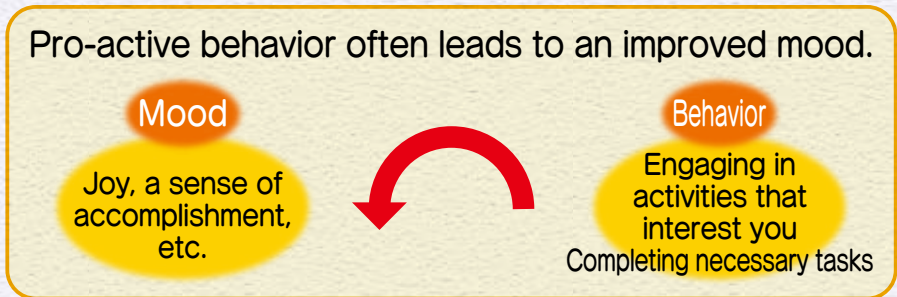
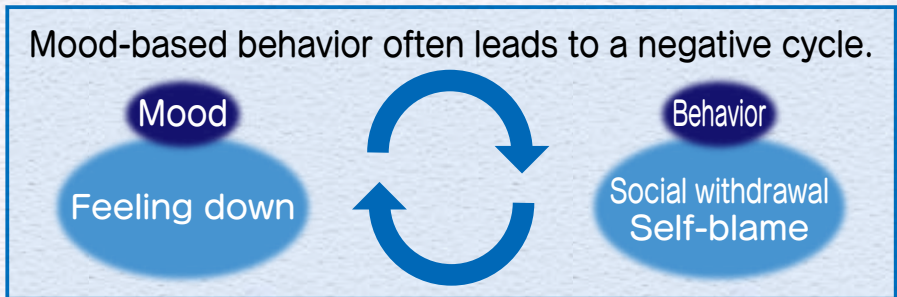
① Calming Your Thoughts

Events, thoughts, and feelings are closely connected. By reevaluating your thoughts in response to a given event, you can change the way you feel.



② Taking Actions to Change Your Mood

When you feel depressed, depressive behaviors increase. As these behaviors increase, your mood worsens, creating a vicious cycle. By changing your behavior, you can work to break this cycle.



* Our center provides support in incorporating CBT into daily life. The program is for individuals who have been receiving treatment for depression or similar conditions for at least six months and whose primary care physicians recognize the need for participation.





Consultation and Recovery Programs for Depression

<p>“ShizuKoko” Group Recovery Program for Depression</p>	<p>This program runs 2 or 3 days a week for about three months and includes CBT, psychoeducation, meetings, and creative activities.</p>	<p>Shizuoka City Mental Health Center</p>
<p>“Teruteru Heart” Phone Consultations</p>	<p>Over-the-phone consultations about depression, stress, etc., are available on weekdays from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM.</p>	<p>Call (054)262-3033</p>

Inquiries

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