

Mood Depressive Disorders

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial will cover a subcategory of mood disorders known as depressive disorders. Our discussion breaks down as follows:

1. Depressive Disorders
2. Types of Depressive Disorders
 - a. Major Depressive Disorder
 - b. Dysthymic Disorder
3. Treatment of Depressive Disorders

1. Depressive Disorders

A depressive disorder is any mood disorder that occurs in the absence of manic episodes. A person may display long periods of symptoms like reduced activity, lack of enjoyment in other activities, and feelings of loneliness and hopelessness.

Depression is one of the most common psychological disorders. Over 19 million people experience depression in some form. Depression often occurs with other psychological disorders, and can also be a symptom of another disorder.

➦ **EXAMPLE** For instance, depression can be a symptom of anxiety disorders or schizophrenia. On the other hand, it can also be a natural reaction to a negative or stressful life event.

Depression differs from simply feeling very sad or down because it occurs for long periods of time. This can range from weeks all the way up to multiple years of feeling the specific kind of depression.

It's important to note that depression isn't necessarily sadness; often these words are used synonymously, but depression is more akin to feeling a lack of something, like feelings of hopelessness and a lack of joy or happiness. In other words, it's a bit more like emptiness or a lack of emotion. Sadness, on the other hand, is an expression of an emotion that you're actually feeling.

Depression can often affect a person's behavior. If a person is depressed, they can have trouble sleeping or eating. They can also display poor performance at work or at school.

2. Types of Depressive Disorders

There are two major types of depressive disorders:

- Major depressive disorder
- Dysthymic disorder

2a. Major Depressive Disorder

Major depressive disorder is a pure depressive disorder, in a sense. A person experiences depression for a period of at least two weeks in length. It is also considered "pure" because it is not caused by any substances, bereavement, or other psychological disorders.

Persons with major depressive disorder often have recurring thoughts of death and of suicide. This can be an incredibly dangerous disorder in terms of the behavioral component of it and the effect that it can have. In fact, 60% of people that commit suicide are depressed in some form.



TERM TO KNOW

Major Depressive Disorder

A depressive disorder in which a person experiences depression for at least two weeks

2b. Dysthymic Disorder

Dysthymic disorder is a form of depression that isn't necessarily as severe as major depressive disorder. The symptoms that a person with dysthymic disorder displays aren't quite as extreme or as problematic for the person, although it is still a problem and can impair their functions.

In dysthymic disorder, the symptoms occur for an even longer period of time. The feelings are present most of the time and occur for at least two years in length. Because of this length, it can lead to some very severe problems in a person's life where they withdraw and they don't have social support from other people. They may constantly have feelings of worthlessness or loneliness. While the symptoms may not be as severe and may not require hospitalization due to suicidal thoughts, this disorder still has a major effect on a person's life because of they are symptomatic for that longer period of time.



TERM TO KNOW

Dysthymic Disorder

A form of depression that isn't as severe as major depressive disorder and that lasts for a longer period of time (for the majority of the time for at least two years)

3. Treatment of Depressive Disorders

Treatment for depressive disorders can vary widely. There are a lot of different treatment types that people will experiment with, especially considering the prevalence of this disorder. The two major forms of treatment are drugs and psychotherapy.

Drugs are a well-known treatment for depression. Antidepressants like Prozac or Zoloft have entered common speech. In general, antidepressant drugs have gotten a lot better and have fewer side effects. Drugs known as SSRIs, or selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors, are a newer type of drug with less serious side effects than options like MAO inhibitors or tricyclic antidepressants, which were classically being used.

Psychotherapy on its own has proven to be very effective in the treatment of disorders like dysthymic disorder. It's even more effective with major depressive disorder and other types of depressive disorders when used in conjunction with medication--using drugs and psychotherapy in tandem produces the best outcome for patients with these types of disorders.



SUMMARY

Depressive disorders are any mood disorder that occurs in the absence of manic episodes. It is one of the most common types of psychological disorders and is characterized by a person displaying long periods of symptoms like reduced activity, lack of enjoyment in other activities, and feelings of loneliness and hopelessness.

Two types of depressive disorders are **major depressive disorder** and **dysthymic disorder**. Major depressive disorder lasts for at least two weeks in length, and has severe symptoms of depression. **Dysthymic disorder** lasts for a longer period of time than major depressive disorder--at least two years--but has less severe symptoms. Treatment for depressive disorders can include drugs, like Prozac, Zoloft, and SSRIs, and psychotherapy. The best outcome is usually produced when these treatments are used in conjunction with each other.

Good luck!

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia Author Erick Taggart



TERMS TO KNOW

Dysthymic Disorder

A form of depression that isn't as severe as major depressive disorder and that lasts for a longer period of time (for the majority of the time for at least two years).

Major Depressive Disorder

A depressive disorder in which a person experiences depression for at least two weeks.