

Depression:

Scientific and spiritual dimensions

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Overview

- ∅ Symptoms of depression
- ∅ Factors contributing to the development and maintenance of depression
- ∅ Treatments for depression
- ∅ Strategies for coping with depression
- ∅ Spiritual dimensions of depression



What is depression?

- ∅ Persistent feelings of sadness
- ∅ Loss of interest or pleasure
- ∅ Change in appetite
- ∅ Change in sleeping patterns
- ∅ Agitation or slowing of physical movement
- ∅ Fatigue/loss of energy
- ∅ Feelings of worthlessness
- ∅ Poor concentration/memory/decisiveness
- ∅ Recurrent thoughts of death/suicide



Forms of Depression

- ∅ Major depressive disorder (MDD)
- ∅ Bipolar Disorder (BPD)
- ∅ Dysthymic Disorder (DD)
- ∅ Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)



Impact of Mild Depression

- ∅ Robs people of joy and pleasure
- ∅ Leads to withdrawal from family and friends
- ∅ Work difficulties
- ∅ Significantly undermines general quality of life



Impact of Severe Depression

- ∅ "Shutting down"
- ∅ Disengage from family and friends
- ∅ Pull away from valued activities
- ∅ Give up working
- ∅ Deepening pit of anger, despair, meaninglessness, self-loathing, emotional and spiritual anguish
- ∅ Suicide



Physical factors contributing to the development of depression

- Ø Genetics
- Ø Imbalances in brain chemistry
 - Ø Serotonin, norepinephrine, dopamine
- Ø Hormones
 - Ø Underactive thyroid, overactive pituitary/adrenal
- Ø Medical conditions
 - Ø MS, Parkinson's, stroke, cancer, heart disease, RA, diabetes



Psychological factors contributing to the development of depression

- ∅ Early history of loss
- ∅ Traumatic events
- ∅ Severe ongoing stress
- ∅ Major losses
- ∅ Accumulation of minor stressors (i.e., hassles)
- ∅ Certain personality traits (e.g., perfectionism)
- ∅ Certain unhelpful attitudes or “core beliefs”



Core beliefs

- ∅ Self-worth contingencies
- ∅ E.g. "My value as a person depends on gaining the approval of other people"
- ∅ E.g., "If I fail at something then it means that I am a complete failure"
- ∅ E.g., "If I don't do as well as other people, it means I am an inferior human being"



Factors contributing to the “downward spiral” of depression

- ∅ Pervasive pattern of negativity in thinking
- ∅ “Cognitive triad” in depression:
 - ∅ Negative thoughts about the self
 - ∅ Negative thoughts about the future
 - ∅ Negative thoughts about the world/others



Factors contributing to the “downward spiral” of depression

- ∅ Certain unhelpful and “distorted” thinking patterns:
 - ∅ Over-generalizing
 - ∅ Catastrophizing
 - ∅ Dichotomous or “black-and-white” thinking
 - ∅ Emotional reasoning
 - ∅ Labelling
 - ∅ “Should” statements
 - ∅ Fortune-telling and mind-reading



Factors contributing to the “downward spiral” of depression

- ∅ Behavioural de-activation (“do-nothing-ism”)
- ∅ Avoidance
- ∅ Social withdrawal
- ∅ Procrastination
- ∅ Submissiveness or unassertiveness
- ∅ Aggression
- ∅ Carbohydrate cravings



Biological treatments

- ∅ Exercise
- ∅ Light therapy
- ∅ Anti-depressant medication
- ∅ Electro-convulsive therapy (ECT)
- ∅ Transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS)*
- ∅ Deep brain stimulation (DBS)*



Psychological Treatments

- ∅ Cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT)
 - ∅ Cognitive therapy (CT)
 - ∅ Behaviour therapy (BT)
 - ∅ Rational-emotive behaviour therapy (REBT)
 - ∅ Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT)
 - ∅ Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT)
 - ∅ Dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT)
- ∅ Interpersonal therapy (IPT)



How can I combat depression?

- ∅ Regular exercise
- ∅ Social support, regular fellowship, confiding relationships
- ∅ Structure and routine in daily lives
- ∅ Staying active
 - ∅ Pleasurable activities
 - ∅ Mastery or achievement-related activities
- ∅ Fight avoidance, procrastination, etc.



Effective stress management

- ∅ Relaxation/recreation
- ∅ Self-care (i.e., sleep, nutrition, etc.)
- ∅ Time management skills
- ∅ Margin
- ∅ Appropriate boundaries
- ∅ Interpersonal assertiveness
- ∅ Flexible, helpful, rational thinking habits



Depression: spiritual dimensions?

- ∅ Sin and depression:
- ∅ Caution! Beware of oversimplification
- ∅ Sinful patterns of behaviour
- ∅ Making good things into ultimate things
- ∅ Work, love, family, health, financial security, social approval, achievement, pleasure



Depression: spiritual dimensions?

“Every now and then
The things I lean on lose their meaning
And I find myself careening
Into places where I should not let me go”

“Something in the way she moves”
(James Taylor)



Depression: spiritual dimensions?

- ∅ Who am I?
- ∅ Do I matter?
- ∅ What's the point of my existence?
- ∅ Does God exist?
- ∅ Does God care?
- ∅ Why does God allow suffering?
- ∅ Why me?
- ∅ Is there hope?



Where can we turn for answers to
the kinds of ultimate questions
that depression forces us to
confront?



Depression and ultimate questions

- ∅ Christians believe that the Bible presents a “worldview” or set of fundamental truths which, when believed and embraced:
- ∅ Address life’s most important questions;
- ∅ Challenge the unhelpful patterns of thought and belief associated with depression;
- ∅ Bring comfort and healing to those in its grip



Depression and ultimate questions

- ∅ The Bible addresses fundamental issues related to identity, meaning, purpose, value, suffering and hope in a way that is:
 - ∅ Honest
 - ∅ Clear
 - ∅ Reasonable
 - ∅ Compelling
 - ∅ Comprehensive



Depression in the Bible

- ∅ "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning. O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer; And by night, but I have no rest" (Psalm 22: 1-2)



Depression in the Bible

- Ø "But I am a worm and not a man, a reproach of men and despised by the people. All who see me sneer at me; They separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying, 'Commit yourself to the Lord; let Him deliver him, because He delights in him.'" (Psalm 22: 6-8)



Depression in the Bible

- ø "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within me, my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and You lay me in the dust of death..."
(Psalm 22: 14-15)



Depression in the Bible

- ø "My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?' ... Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me?...As a shattering of my bones, my adversaries revile me, while they say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?' Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me?" (Psalm 42)



Where is hope?

- ∅ "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me?..."
- ∅ HOPE IN GOD...for I shall yet praise Him (Psalm 42:11)
- ∅ According to the Bible, our ultimate hope is found in a personal relationship with God Himself—a relationship made possible through the work of Jesus Christ



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