

# OVERCOMING DEPRESSION

## HOW PSYCHOLOGISTS HELP WITH DEPRESSIVE DISORDERS

Everyone experiences sadness at times. But depression is something more. Depression is extreme sadness or despair that lasts more than days. It interferes with the activities of daily life and can even cause physical pain. Fortunately, depression is highly treatable.



### Understanding depression

Depression, also known as major depressive disorder or clinical depression, is one of the most common mental disorders in the United States. In 2014, an estimated 15.7 million adults in the U.S. — about 6.7 percent of all U.S. adults — had at least one major depressive episode, according to the National Institute of Mental Health.

Depression affects different people in different ways, but most of them experience some combination of the following symptoms:

- Prolonged sadness or feelings of emptiness
- Feelings of helplessness or hopelessness
- Feelings of guilt or worthlessness
- Anger and irritability
- Restlessness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Fatigue
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Appetite changes
- Chronic pain, headaches or stomach aches
- Loss of interest in activities
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Thoughts of death or suicide

Depression is caused by a combination of genetic, biological, psychological, social and environmental factors. People who have a family history of depression, and people with serious chronic diseases such as heart disease or cancer, are at an increased risk of depression. Major life changes, trauma and

stress can also bring about an episode of depression, although some episodes of depression begin without any obvious external cause.



### Treatment for depression

Depression isn't a sign of weakness. It's not something you can just "snap out of." It's an illness that requires professional treatment. Yet with the right care, people can feel better.

Antidepressant medications can be helpful for reducing depression symptoms in some people, especially in people with severe depression. Psychotherapy is also an effective treatment, either alone or in combination with medications. The benefits of psychotherapy may have an enduring effect that protects against symptoms returning even after treatment is ended.



### Seeing a psychologist about depression

Licensed psychologists are highly trained mental health professionals with experience in helping patients recover from depression. Several different approaches to psychotherapy have been shown to help individuals recover from depression, especially those with mild to moderate depression.

Psychotherapy can help people with depression to:

- Pinpoint life events that contribute to their depression and help them find ways to change, accept or adapt to those situations
- Set realistic goals for the future





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**MentalHealth.gov**

Let's talk about it



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Find a psychologist

- Identify distorted thought processes or unhelpful behaviors that contribute to feelings of hopelessness and helplessness
- Develop skills to cope with symptoms and problems, and identify or prevent future episodes of depression
- Two of the most common evidence-based therapies for depression are cognitive behavioral therapy and interpersonal therapy.

**Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)** is a type of therapy in which patients learn to identify and manage negative thought and behavior patterns that can contribute to their depression. CBT helps patients identify unhelpful or negative thinking, change inaccurate beliefs, change behaviors that might make depression worse and interact with others in more positive ways.

**Interpersonal therapy (IPT)** is a form of therapy in which patients learn to improve their relationships with others by better expressing their emotions and solving problems in healthier ways. IPT helps patients resolve or adapt to troubling life events, build social skills and organize their relationships to increase support for coping with depressive symptoms and life stressors.

*Psychotherapy can help patients learn ways to better cope with stress and manage their symptoms of depression.*

There is no one “right” approach to therapy. Therapists work closely with their patients to create tailored treatment plans to address their unique needs and concerns. Psychotherapy can help patients learn ways to better cope with stress and manage their symptoms of depression. These strategies can lead to recovery and enable patients to function at their best.

To find a licensed psychologist in your area, use our **PsychologistLocator.org**.

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## DEPRESSION IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Depression is common in adolescents. In 2014, an estimated 2.8 million children ages 12–17 in the U.S. (more than 11 percent) had at least one major depressive episode, according to the National Institute of Mental Health.

Adolescents are often moody. But if your child is extremely irritable, has ongoing problems with motivation, or has persistent sadness that lasts two weeks or more, it's a good idea to have him or her evaluated for depression.

While antidepressant medications can be effective for children and adolescents, they can have side effects in young people, including an increased risk of suicidal thoughts. For that reason, many parents and healthcare providers prefer to try treating children with psychotherapy first. Both cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and interpersonal therapy (IPT) are effective treatments for young people with depression. Studies also show that a combination of antidepressant medication and cognitive behavior therapy is highly effective in treating youth depression.

The good news is that most kids recover from depression. Still, research shows that people who have depression as children are at a higher risk of having a recurrence later in adolescence or adulthood. Both CBT and IPT can help kids recognize the signs of a depressive episode, so that they can monitor their symptoms and get help quickly if they experience a recurrence.



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