

*Sheila Jenkins, Ph.D.*

*Psychologist*

*5821 Southwest Freeway, Suite 380*

*Houston, Texas 77057*

*713 266-9837*

---

## **Coping with Depression**

### **What is depression**

Depression is a negative mood that may be the result of a chemical imbalance in the brain or a reaction to a negative situation. A negative life event such as the ending of a relationship, the death of a significant loved one, loss of a job, or a serious medical problem can trigger a depressive episode. Unhealthy situations can affect your mood. For instance, feeling unable to say no to demands made by other people, being around negative or unsupportive people, having more expenses than financial resources, or working in a stressful work environment. While one person may become depressed after a significant life event, another person may be unaffected. This should not make you feel abnormal or less capable. Depression is not a personal weakness or failure. Depression is one of the most common and most serious mental health problems facing people today. One out of ten people will experience a depressive episode at some point in life.

### **Symptoms of depression**

Depression can impact every aspect of your life and the symptoms may interfere with your day-to-day functioning. Some symptoms are physical (meaning that they affect the way you feel) and some are cognitive (meaning the symptoms affect the way you think). Take a look at the following symptoms of depression and make a note of the ones you have experienced in the past 2 weeks.

- persistent feeling of sadness or “empty” mood
- feelings of hopelessness
- feelings of helplessness
- feelings of worthlessness
- loss of appetite or increase in appetite
- loss of weight or weight gain
- inability to sleep or sleeping too much
- loss of interest in things that were once enjoyed
- decreased energy
- restlessness
- irritability
- difficulty concentrating
- difficulty making decisions
- thoughts of death or suicide

### **Treatment of depression**

There is good news – depression is treatable! If your symptoms last for more than two weeks, you should take the first step to healing by making an appointment with a doctor. Make sure that you talk to a professional who is trained in the treatment of depression. A medical doctor may prescribe a psychotropic medication to reduce the symptoms. A highly trained mental health provider, such as a psychologist, will help you to explore problems associated with depression. Psychologists, who are doctors, have more years of training in the diagnosis, assessment, and treatment of mental and emotional disorders than any other health care provider. Developing effective coping skills is a key

to overcoming depression. In psychotherapy you should learn healthy coping skills and effective problem solving techniques to manage problems in your life. Because the cause and symptoms of depression vary from person to person, treatment may be in the form of psychotherapy or medication or both. Successful treatment should decrease the duration and intensity of the symptoms. Ignoring the symptoms will not make them go away. Rather, the symptoms of depression may become more severe. Remember, you have the power to change the way you think and feel. Start living a more fulfilled, healthy life today.

*Sheila Jenkins, Ph.D., Psychologist, 5821 Southwest Freeway, Suite 380, Houston, Texas 77057  
713 266-9837*