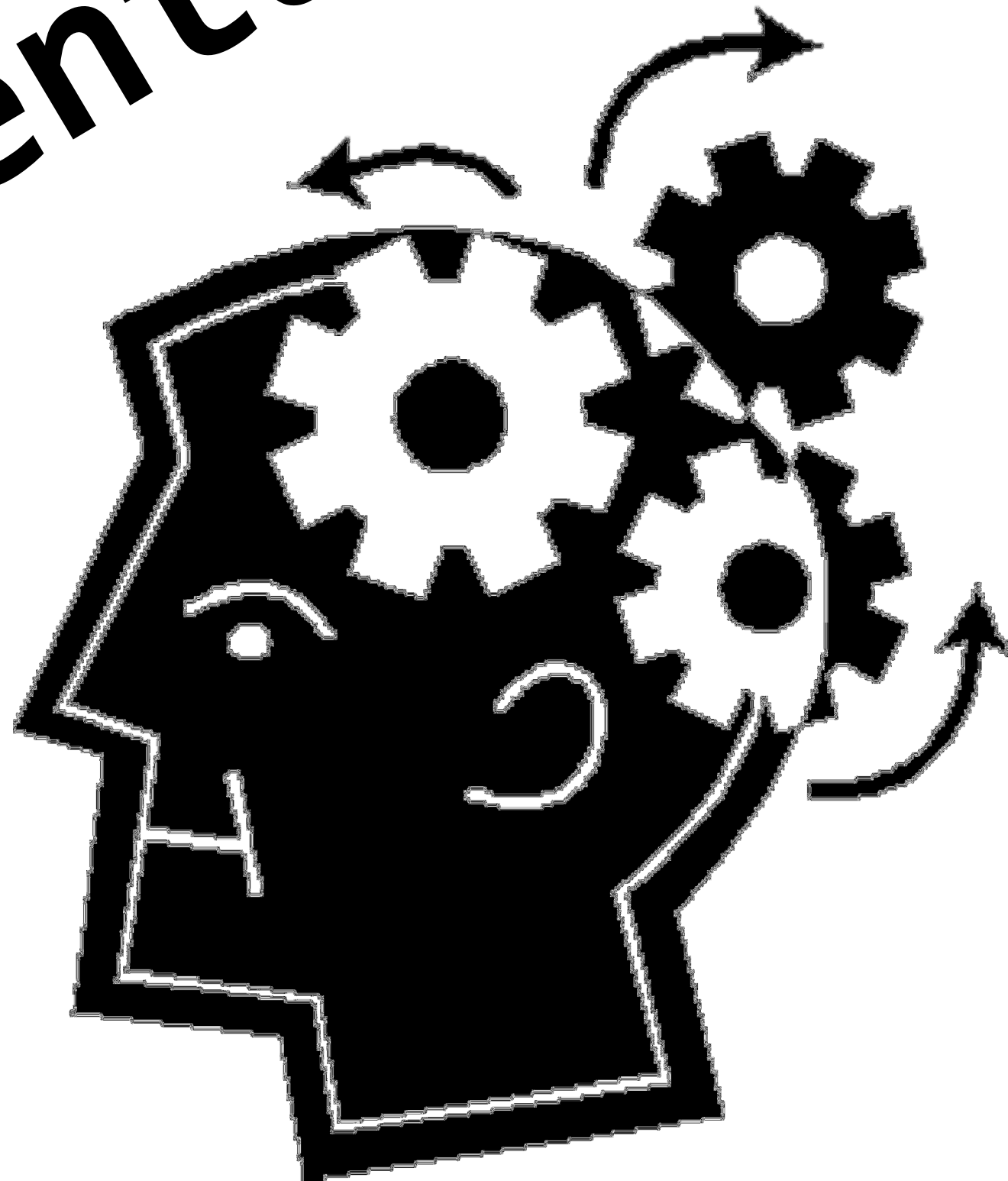


**Mental**

**Health**



**Awareness**

# Causes of Depression

Research indicates that depressive illnesses are disorders of the brain.

There is often a **combination** of the causes of depression:

<b>Abuse.</b>	Past physical, sexual, or emotional.
<b>Medications.</b>	Some drugs for high blood pressure (beta-blockers or reserpine).
<b>Conflict.</b>	Personal conflicts or disputes with family members or friends.
<b>Death or loss.</b>	Sadness or grief from a death can increase the risk of depression.
<b>Genetics.</b>	Family history of depression may increase risk.
<b>Major events.</b>	Includes positive events (new job, graduating, getting married) or moving, losing a job, divorce, and retirement.
<b>Serious illnesses.</b>	Depression may coexist with a major illness or a reaction to the illness.
<b>Substance abuse.</b>	Nearly 30% people with substance abuse problems also have major or clinical depression.



# How can I help?

## ...if it is a loved one who is depressed?

- Make an appointment [doctor, therapist] or go with him/her if they already have one.
- Offer emotional support, understanding, and encouragement.
- Listen carefully.
- Never dismiss feelings, but point out realities and offer hope.
- Never ignore comments about suicide, and report them to his/her therapist or doctor.
- Invite them on walks, outings, and other activities. Keep trying if they decline, but don't push them too much too soon.
- Remind them that with time and treatment, the depression will lift.

## ...if it is myself who is depressed?

- Do not wait too long to get evaluated or treated. Research indicates that the longer one waits, the greater the impairment can be down the road.
- Be active and exercise. Do an activity you once enjoyed.
- Set realistic goals for yourself.
- Break up large tasks into small ones; set some realistic priorities.
- Spend time with other people and confide in a trusted friend or relative.
- Expect your mood to improve gradually, not immediately. Often, sleep and appetite will begin to improve before your depressed mood lifts.
- Postpone important decisions (marriage, divorce, changing jobs) until you feel better. Discuss decisions with others.



# Prevention of Depression

Depression is highly treatable through good health habits. However, some forms may not be preventable since it is triggered by a chemical malfunctioning in the brain.

## Get in the habit!

- Proper diet, exercise
- Taking time out for fun and relaxation
- Not overworking
- Saving time to do things you enjoy



# Risk Factors

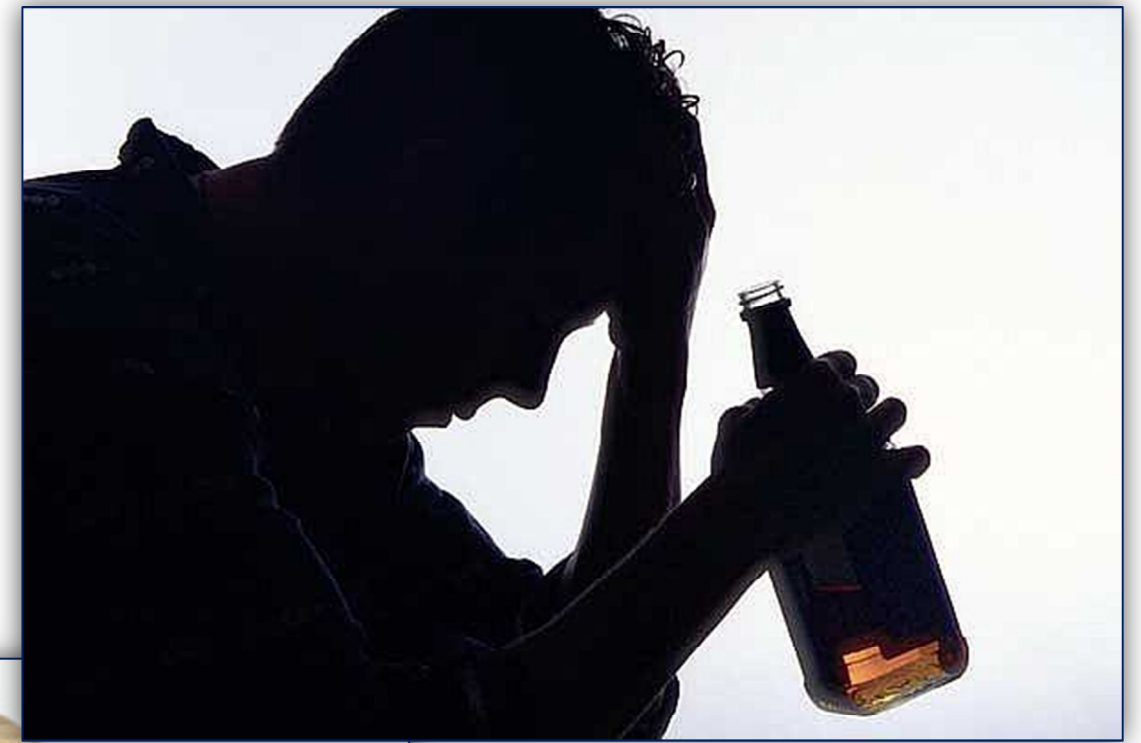
Depression typically begins in the **late 20s** but can happen at any age. The following factors appear to increase the risk of developing or triggering **depression**:

- Biological relatives with depression
- Females
- Traumatic experiences as a child
- Family history of alcoholism
- Family members who have committed suicide
- Experiencing stressful life events (ex. death of loved one)
- Few friends or personal relationships
- Recently given birth
- Depressed mood as a child
- Serious illness
- Low self-esteem, overly dependent, self-critical, pessimistic
- Busing alcohol, nicotine or illicit drugs
- Being poor
- Taking certain high blood pressure medications or sleeping pills

# Signs & Symptoms

The **severity**, **frequency**, and **duration** of symptoms vary depending on the individual and his/her particular illness.

- Persistently sad, anxious, or 'empty' feelings
- Hopelessness or pessimism
- Guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- Irritability, restlessness
- Lose interest in activities or hobbies that were once pleasurable - including sex
- Fatigue and decreased energy
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details, and making decisions
- Insomnia, early-morning wakefulness, or excessive sleeping
- Overeating or appetite loss
- Thoughts of suicide, suicide attempts
- Aches or pains, headaches, cramps that do not ease with treatment



# What is Depression?

Every so often, we get the 'blues,' which passes within a couple of days. When you have depression, it **interferes with daily life** and **causes pain for both you and those who care about you.**

Depression is a common but serious illness.

It is defined by at least **five** of the following occurring simultaneously for at least **two weeks** in adults:

- Depressed mood during most of the day, particularly morning
- Fatigue, loss of energy
- Feelings worthlessness or guilty
- Impaired concentration, indecisiveness
- Insomnia, hypersomnia (excessive sleeping)
- Markedly diminished interest or pleasure in almost all activities almost everyday
- Recurring thoughts of death or suicide
- Restlessness
- Significant weight loss or gain

## Brought to you

by:



## Resources:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/>

<http://webmd.com/>

<http://nimh.gov/>