

INDIA TODAY
Aspire

Psychobabble



DR SAMIR PARIKH

CHIEF,
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH
AND BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES,
MAX HEALTHCARE, DELHI

overcoming DEPRESSION

A STITCH IN TIME SAVES NINE,
ASK FOR HELP AT THE RIGHT TIME

The death of a loved one or the end of a relationship are difficult experiences for an individual to endure. It is normal for feelings of sadness to develop in response to such stressful situations. This mental state might be wrongly described as 'depression'. But sadness and depression are not the same. While feelings of sadness will lessen with time, depression can continue for months, even years.

Depression can be so severe that life hardly feels worth living and sufferers often find that they just cannot cope up with things. Depression of this degree is not a sign of weakness but an illness that needs treatment. It is important to recognise that depression is a common illness. The symptoms are sadness and a lack of interest in a day-to-day life and other pleasurable activities such as sex or partying. The individual loses appetite/weight and the sleep pattern is disturbed. Negative thoughts such as loneliness, helplessness and suicidal tendencies linger in the individual's mind. In such a situation it is important to consult a psychiatrist for help, without unnecessary delay.

There are some major factors that cause depression. One of the reasons is the biochemistry in the brain. Deficiencies in neurotransmitters in the brain — serotonin and dopamine — are responsible for certain symptoms of depression, including anxiety, irritability, and fatigue. Environmental factors can also be one of the causes of depression. Continuous exposure to violence, neglect, abuse, or poverty may make people more vulnerable to the illness. However, it should be noted that depression could still occur under ideal living circumstances.

Depression like any other medical illness can happen to anyone and it is not restricted only to the emotionally weak people.

Depression is one of the most curable mental disorders. Depression can be controlled through exercise, through changes in diet or by taking a vacation. However, in some cases prescribing anti-depressants is necessary. Antidepressants may be prescribed to correct imbalances in the levels of chemicals in the brain. These medications are not sedatives, they are not habit-forming and they generally have no stimulating effect on people not experiencing depression. Psychotherapy or talk therapy may be for the treatment of mild depression. Good social and family support can be very helpful in the management of depression and improves the prognosis of the patient and helps in faster recovery. ★

