

Major Depressive Disorder: Dispelling Myths, Inspiring Hope



Major depressive disorder (MDD), also sometimes called clinical depression, is a common mental health condition.



of the US adult population experiences an episode of MDD each year.

With early identification, diagnosis and a treatment plan that can include a combination of psychotherapy, medication and healthy lifestyle choices, many people with depression can and do get better. Unfortunately, there continue to be a number of myths about MDD that can affect an individual's recognition of the signs and symptoms, willingness to seek care or comfort, recommending a loved one seek mental health treatment.



MYTH

Everybody feels down at some point; depression isn't a "real" mental health condition.



FACT

Major depressive disorder is a serious mental illness. A diagnosis of MDD includes experiencing at least five of the following symptoms, all or most of the day for at least two weeks:

- Changes in sleep
- Changes in appetite
- Lack of concentration
- Loss of energy
- Lack of interest in activities
- Hopelessness or guilty thoughts
- Physical aches and pains or feeling slowed down or agitated
- Suicidal thoughts

These symptoms can have a significant impact on a person's life – it's not simply feeling "down" or "blue."

“My wish is that the world didn't judge us — that we could ask for support so we don't have to suffer in silence, before it's too late. I want there to be more awareness so people can understand that this is an illness. People just write us off, like we don't exist. I understand that people may not know what to say or how to approach us. I want to tell the world that we need support, not silence. Open the dialogue.”



MYTH

The symptoms of major depressive disorder look the same for everyone who experiences it.



FACT

Each person is unique and not everyone experiences the same combination of symptoms. In addition to those listed above, an individual may experience other mental health changes, such as irritability or anger, or physical symptoms like extreme fatigue. A mental health professional can help identify whether changes in mental health status are related to a mental health condition such as MDD.



MYTH

There is no reason to seek treatment for depression because there is no cure – a person with MDD will always struggle.



FACT

There are effective treatments available for people with MDD that have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing or even eliminating symptoms. Treatment options can include psychotherapy, medications, brain stimulation therapies, peer support, and complementary therapies like exercise. It's important to identify a mental health professional who can develop a personalized treatment plan. The plan might also include ways to help you recognize if symptoms re-emerge so they can be addressed quickly before challenges occur.



I went on medical leave and met with a psychologist who diagnosed me with generalized anxiety disorder and major depressive disorder. When she brought up medication, I pushed back. I didn't think it was serious enough to need it. She gently reminded me that being pulled from work was a severe matter. That was my wake-up call. No more downplaying. No more denial. I had to face this head-on.

Awakening is the word that captures my mental health journey. Because once I stopped running and got honest with myself, I finally started to heal. ”



If I could give my younger self one piece of advice, it would be this:
You are not broken.
You don't have to pretend to be okay to be loved.
It's okay to ask for help, and it's okay to put your health first. ”