



Mental Health Conditions

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Biology of Stress



Threat or stressors is identified or realized



Body's stress response reaches a state of alarm



Adrenaline rushes through the body preparing the fight or flight response



*Wear and tear over time (chronic vs. acute)



Stress Responses

PHYSICAL:

- Headaches, stomach aches
- Loss of appetite
- Lack of energy
- Muscle pain/tension in back
- Get sick

COGNITIVE:

- frequent worries
- “I don’t want to deal with this”
- “I don’t have time for this”
- “I can’t give anymore”
- “What if I mess up?”

EMOTIONAL:

- Irritable, easily annoyed
- Impatient
- Anxious, insecure
- Numb

BEHAVIORAL:

- Lash out at others
- Isolate or withdraw
- Waste time doing unproductive things

PEOPLE WITH ANXIETY SAY IT FEELS LIKE:

Being so scared you're paralyzed

The worst-case scenario in any situation is the most likely one

Your mind and body are on high alert for no obvious reason

Being repulsed and afraid of your own body and the illnesses it could possibly have

Needing to escape, but not being able to

Intimidating, overwhelming, and exhausting

You can't breathe; air is all around you, but you can't get to it

You're dying, because there is no way you would feel like this if you weren't

Being constantly aware of every single sound, sight, smell, taste, and texture

Pretending you're okay but really you can't breathe or think straight

Your heart is beating out of your chest

Being so uncomfortable you wish you could crawl out of your own skin

Everything is happening all at once

A constant struggle for control that you will likely never get

Your mind is racing and you have so many thoughts at the same time that it is hard to have one complete thought

Always worrying about the future and the possibility of disappointing others

Constant worry and fear

Never being able to truly relax

Having fear of what tomorrow holds

Being powerless against your own mind

Not being good enough and always blaming yourself

Never being able to truly relax

PEOPLE WITH DEPRESSION SAY IT FEELS LIKE:

You are a burden to everyone

Fighting an exhausting battle against yourself

A needle of pain pricking at your body at every chance it gets

You want your life to get better, but everything is so hard to do and you have no motivation

A dark, empty room with no escape

It's hard to be happy, to love or accept love

Your head is surrounded by a thick, black, unrelenting fog

You need to hug someone. But at the same time, you don't want any human to hug you

All you want is to go home and just curl up and fall asleep forever

You'll never be happy again, even when you know that's not true

Exhausting, like you're living in a cage

You have a lump in your throat, as if you're about to cry at any moment, all day

Being misunderstood and ashamed

Drowning and no one sees it and you feel helpless against the water around you

Hopeless. Like there is nobody and nothing that can help you forget everything that makes you sad

Really terribly lonely all of the time

An overwhelming sense of sadness about life and about all that you are and all you do

Difficult to tell if you can trust your own perception of reality

Soul sucking torture

You are numb to the world

Heavy and tired, like you're moving through quicksand

#mentalillnessfeelslike

Share what life with a depressive disorder feels like for you in words, images or video by tagging your social media posts with [#mentalillnessfeelslike](#).

Posts will be displayed at mentalhealthamerica.net/feelslike where you can also submit anonymously if you choose.

Most common types of Anxiety Disorders

- General Anxiety Disorder
- Panic Disorder
- Phobias
- Post-Trauma Stress Disorder
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
- Social Anxiety Disorder

Anxiety

When your body's fight or flight response is activated in inappropriate situations.



Physical Symptoms

- Pounding/racing heart
- Dizziness and vertigo
- Sweating
- Muscle tension
- Insomnia
- Shortness of breath or feelings of suffocation



Emotional Symptoms

- Feelings of dread
- Constant worry
- Irritability and edginess
- Absentmindedness
- Fear of losing control
- Avoidance



Depression

A mood disorder characterized by low mood, a feeling of sadness, and a general loss of interest in things.



Physical Symptoms

- Tiredness or loss of energy
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Loss of sex drive
- Weight fluctuations
- Changes in appetite



Emotional Symptoms

- Persistent low mood
- Feelings of worthlessness or hopelessness
- Not enjoying things you used to enjoy
- Thinking about death or suicide
- Taking unnecessary risks
- Irritability



Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Generalized Anxiety Disorder is the most common type of anxiety disorder.

Defined as excessive anxiety and worry about multiple events or activities for at least six months:

- ❖ Anxiety may overlap with depression as some symptoms are similar

Similar symptoms include: sleep disturbance, poor concentration, and sense of hopelessness.

Different symptoms: difficulty controlling worries, tension, autonomic hyperarousal, nightmares.



Symptoms of Anxiety

- Excessive Worry/ Anxiety about multiple areas of life
- Restlessness
- Muscle Tension
- Physiological Arousal
- Fatigue
- Irritability
- Sleep Problems
- Concentration problems/inability to focus
- Negative thinking patterns



Treatment for Anxiety

- Therapeutic Interventions
 - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
 - Mindfulness
 - Talk therapy
 - Biofeedback or Neurofeedback
 - Stress Inoculation
 - Medication

- Lifestyle changes
 - Reduce caffeine intake
 - Sleep hygiene
 - Exercise
 - Deep breathing exercises
 - Organization, planning ahead



Depression

Genetic+Biological+Dietary+Environmental Component

Risk Factors:

- ❑ Depression has a strong genetic component- having a biological parent with depression increases the risk of developing depression
 - ❑ Among first degree biological relatives-depression is 1.5 to 3 times more common when compared to the general population
- ❑ Neurochemical Imbalances in the brain
- ❑ Low levels of Serotonin
- ❑ Prolonged exposure to stress leading to elevated levels of cortisol which is associated with increase in depression



Symptoms of Depression

- Sadness/depression for 2 weeks
- Loss of interest or pleasure in once enjoyable activities
- Hopelessness
- Insomnia/Hypersomnia
- Lack of appetite or increase in appetite/ Weight Changes
- Difficulty with focus and concentration
- Fatigue
- Feelings of guilt or low self-worth
- Thoughts of death



Treatment for Depression

- Lifestyle modifications
 - Sleep, nutrition, physical activity, social support
- Therapeutic Interventions
 - Talk Therapy or Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
 - Altering negative thought patterns
 - Emotion/Mood Regulation
 - Address feelings of helplessness and hopelessness
 - Behavioral Activation Strategies
- Medication
 - Antidepressants that addresses neurotransmitter functioning
 - Selective serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) treat depression



Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

- Trauma is defined as the experience of psychological distress after a terrible or life-threatening event.
- It can be described as an extreme or violent event that is experienced or perceived by one as shocking to the core.
- Emotional reactions to trauma can vary greatly and are significantly influenced by the individual's sociocultural history and previous exposure to trauma.



TYPES OF TRAUMA

Car accident

Sexual and physical assault

Childhood abuse, interpersonal violence

Military combat/WAR

Natural disaster

Race-based trauma*

CLUSTERS OF TRAUMA-BASED RESPONSES

Re-experiencing

Avoidance

Changes in cognition and mood

Arousal reactions



Trauma Responses

Re-experiencing: Involuntary and intrusive distressing memories. Includes flashbacks, Unwanted thoughts and images about the traumatic event, nightmares, and intrusive thoughts.

Avoidance-avoiding certain people, places, and things that remind them of the traumatic event.

Cognition and mood-trouble recalling event, person may feel numb, guilt, and shame.

- ❖ Cognitive sx's may also contribute to one's experiences of an "out of body" experience.
- ❖ Mood responses include increased anxiety and worry, depression, anger, feelings of isolation and social withdrawal.

Altered state of arousal: intensely startled by stimuli that is a reminder of the trauma. This can contribute to sleep problems, inability to focus and concentrate, outbursts of anger, feeling on edge and restlessness.



RACE-BASED TRAUMA

- Trauma secondary to racism
 - ex: Everyday life events, police brutality, daily race-related stressors, microaggressions, and chronic contextual stressors
- When a person experiences and perceives an event to be negative, sudden and uncontrollable, that's considered a traumatic event.
- Vicarious traumatization



Race-based trauma responses

- ❑ Physical responses: whenever stress is involved as a result of the fight, flight, or freeze response, there is always the possibility that exposure to traumatic events will affect our physical bodies and contribute to medical problems.
 - increased heart rate
 - blood pressure
 - fatigue, headaches
 - and in children it can disrupt healthy brain development

- ❑ Repeated exposure to traumatic and stressful events whether it's through firsthand exposure or for example, watching videos and perpetual images of black bodies being brutalized through the media has significant, residual effects on the mind and body.

Oftentimes it has been associated with increased susceptibility to experience trauma-based responses and even PTSD. It also can lead to significant functional impairments of Black people and other folx of color.

Impact of trauma



Trauma can cause:



Changes in neurobiological structure and function

e.g., delayed development in particular brain regions



Disruption of physiological emotion regulation processes

e.g., cortisol release, heart rate variability, fight/flight response



Disruption of cognitive interpretations of situations

e.g., over/under-sensitive recognition of threat



Formation of maladaptive behavioral responses

e.g., learned aggressive responses, avoidance

Bipolar Disorder

Is a mental illness that causes alterations in an individual's mood, activity levels, energy and concentration. These unusual shifts in a person's mood can make it difficult to carry out daily tasks. Mood changes can range from having elevated, elated, or energized behavior (referred to as manic episodes) to sad, down, hopeless, or indifference (referred to as depressive episodes).

Diagnosis of Bipolar disorder is highly important in helping a person live and function with this illness. An evaluation is needed to formulate best course of treatment that takes into account-family history, life experiences, duration of symptoms and episodes. Risk factors may include genetics and brain functioning-neurochemical changes that requires psychiatric attention.

Symptoms of Bipolar Disorder

- Flight of Ideas (racing thoughts)
- Grandiosity/inflated sense of self esteem
- Highly Distractible
- Inhibition/Indiscretion (engaging in high risk behaviors)
- Increased substance use, engaging in sexual activities, spending excessive money
- Increase in goal-directed activity
- Psychomotor agitation
- Decreased need for sleep
- Pressured Speech and Talkative
- Expansive mood lasting one week (or possibly less if hospitalized, always rule out substances as cause)

Treatment for Bipolar Disorder

Therapeutic Interventions:

Psychotherapy
Cognitive behavioral therapy
Family-focused therapy

Medications:

Mood stabilizers
Antipsychotics
Antidepressants

*an effective treatment plan includes both therapy and medication in treating Bipolar disorder. Consult with a doctor for best forms of treatment.

Warning Signs of Suicide

Talking about wanting to die

Looking for a way to kill oneself

Talking about feeling hopeless or no purpose

Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable
pain.

Talking about being a burden to others

Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs

Acting anxious, agitated, or recklessly

Sleeping too little or too much

Withdrawing or feeling isolated

Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge

Displaying extreme mood swings

Here are some tips for starting a conversation:

Listen. The most important thing you can do is let the person know that you are available to listen and hear about what is going on in their brain without judgement.

Ask how you can help. Give the power back to the person that's struggling. Ask how you can be helpful, whether it's sitting with them when they're lonely or helping them choose a doctor.

Keep it casual. This is a friend you care about, and we're here to support. Follow our [Always Ask steps](#) to guide you through the conversation. Grab a cup of coffee, invite them over for the best Netflix binge, or host a dinner and mention that you're concerned to begin the conversation. Totally cool. Totally casual.

Let them open up at their pace. If they're not ready to talk, let them know that you're here to listen whenever they're ready.

Encourage them to reach out for help. We are here for everyone. Encourage them to text 741741 if they need help. You could even help them save the number in their phone for whenever they are in a hot moment. That way, even when you are not there, we can help them get to cool and calm.

What to Do, How to help or get help

If someone you know exhibits warning signs of suicide:

Do not leave the person alone

Remove any firearms, alcohol, drugs, or sharp objects that could be used in a suicide attempt

Call/text 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline or chat services at suicidepreventionlifeline.org (24/7)
Crisis text support also available by texting NAMI to 741741

Take the person or self to an emergency room or seek help by contacting a mental health professional

Trauma-related strategies

- Being aware of your triggers and awareness of negative and positive states
- Breathe slowly and deeply
- Validating your experiences and emotions
- Focus on your five senses
- Using a gravity or weighted blanket



10 Self-Soothing Methods



Breathe deeply



Journaling



Have a good cry



Listen to music



Grounding techniques



Positive self-talk



Cognitive restructuring



Physical contact



Exercise



Mindfulness activities