

The American Counseling Association's "*Counseling Corner*" Weekly Columns

Depression: A Very Treatable Illness

from the American Counseling Association

With most illnesses, it's relatively easy to realize that something is not right. It might be a fever, that persistent cough, a sharp pain or any of a number of other symptoms. But depression, especially in its early stages, can be more difficult to recognize.

That's unfortunate, because as an illness, just like any other illness, it can become more serious if not treated and can lead to a variety of complications. And depression is most certainly an illness. While it may not be caused by a bacteria or virus, it can have just as serious an impact on a person's life as cancer or any other major health issue.

And depression, like any other disease, has a number of common symptoms that make it recognizable. What are those symptoms that should have you concerned?

- when you experience changes in sleep or eating patterns
- having strong feelings of sadness, guilt, hopelessness or worthlessness
- finding yourself having trouble concentrating or making decisions
- experiencing a listlessness and lack of energy for no real reason
- losing interest or enjoyment from activities you usually enjoyed
- beginning to have negative thoughts that you're no good or can't do anything right
- having thoughts of death or suicide.

While all of us can experience times when we're feeling low and things just aren't going right, clinical depression is when one or more of the above symptoms are being experienced over a period of time. If a person has been suffering from symptoms such as these for two weeks or more, it's time to seek professional help.

This can be difficult simply because someone suffering from depression may think that no one can really help and that nothing can be done to make things better for them.

Such feelings are unfortunate because depression is highly treatable. A trained professional counselor may recommend a combination of counseling and medications to reduce and eliminate the symptoms of depression.

Seeking such help is especially important because depression, unlike the common cold, is not going to go away on its own. Rather, ignoring the symptoms of depression can often lead to more serious, even life-threatening, problems. If you, or someone close to you, is experiencing the symptoms of depression, talk to your family doctor, a professional counselor or your local mental health center about the help available.

Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org.

###

words: 392