

WHAT IS MAJOR DEPRESSION?

Depression affects almost 15 million Americans

each year. Sadness is a normal human response to a loss, failure or disappointment. Major depression is different. It is a serious condition that affects one's thoughts, feelings, behavior, mood and physical health.

People experiencing depression often experience periods of wellness that alternate with periods of illness. Depression may require long-term treatment to keep symptoms from returning, as with any other chronic illness.

COMMON SYMPTOMS:

- Sleep pattern changes
- Decreased or increased appetite
- Poor concentration/inability to make decisions
- Loss of energy/ability to perform daily routines
- Lack of interest in activities the person used to enjoy
- Low self-esteem. During periods of depression, people often dwell on memories of losses or failures
- Strong feelings of hopelessness or guilt

Source: nami.org

ERIN'S* STORY

I AM A SURVIVOR. I have clawed my way out of that dark place, and with the support of friends and family, specifically my brother, I have moved on. I walk every day, sometimes in the rain or the snow, because exercise and light are part of the cure. Walking every day is as important as breathing for me. Thankfully, I have not felt depressed in several years. But that is today. I will always wonder if today is the day that depression will rear its ugly head, but I know with strength and support, I can make my way through. I have it all- a wonderful husband, healthy, happy children, a beautiful home, all the things that "should" make someone happy. But during a depressive episode, none of that matters. Depression isn't something you can make go away by telling yourself that everything is okay, that your life is good. Being told to cheer up is like telling someone with cancer to cure themselves. Depression IS NOT A CHOICE. Just because you can't see it doesn't mean it's not real. If you know someone who is depressed, sit with them quietly. Offer to go for a walk with them. Just be there to listen if they need to cry. I am no longer going to be ashamed of this. It's part of who I am. Until we create a world where mental illness is out in the open, things won't change for those of us who suffer.

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