

A Frank Discussion About Depression

Presented by
CIGNA Employee
Assistance Program



Seminar Goals

- Know the definition, signs and symptoms of depression
- Effects on workplace, children and family
- Obstacles to seeking help
- Treatments for depression
- How to talk to a depressed person about getting help
- Know the benefits of your Employee Assistance Program



Depression – Basic Facts

- What is depression?
- How long does it last?
- Can it be cured?
- What are the types of depression?



What Causes Depression?

- A disorder of the brain
- Brain circuitry responsible for the regulation of moods, thinking, sleep, appetite, and behavior fail to function properly
- A combination of genetic, cognitive, and environmental factors are often involved in the onset of a depressive disorder



Signs and Symptoms of Depression

- Sadness
- Feelings of extreme guilt
- Suicidal ideas
- Insomnia
- Diminished interest in activities
- Difficulty concentrating
- Anxiety
- Appetite changes
- Weight changes
- Irritability



Signs and Symptoms of Depression Continued

- Mood swings
- Distorted thinking
- Low self-esteem
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Exhaustion
- Feelings of helplessness
- Agitation
- Social withdrawal
- Indecisiveness
- Decreased sexual interest



Symptoms in the Workplace:

- Persistent sad & empty mood
- Feeling hopeless
- Loss of interest in ordinary activities
- Disturbances in eating and sleeping patterns; fatigue at work
- Irritability with co-workers
- Difficulty concentrating; missed deadlines; errors
- Thoughts of suicide



Effects of Depression in the Workplace

- Decreased productivity
- Morale problems
- Lack of cooperation
- Safety problems, accidents
- Absenteeism
- Frequent complaints of being tired all the time
- Complaints of unexplained aches and pains
- Alcohol and drug abuse



Obstacles to Seeking Treatment

- Embarrassment, the stigma of mental illness: “only crazy people go to shrinks”
- Believing depression is a personal weakness: “I just need to buckle down and deal with it”
- “It costs too much”, or “I don’t have time”
- A belief that treatment won’t help
- A feeling of not deserving help
- In severe depression, people lack the ability to take action



Treatments for Depression

■ Inpatient

- If danger to self or others
- Should include both medication and psychotherapy

■ Outpatient

- Psychotherapy, a talk therapy, one-to-one, group and/or marital
- Medication



Treatments for Depression (cont.)

- Need to be aware of dual diagnosis e.g. alcohol/drugs and depression.
- With appropriate treatment approximately 80% recover
- Improvement usually seen in a matter of weeks.



Suicide – Basic Facts

- Suicide rates are not the highest during the holidays
- Journal of American Medical Association reports that 95% of all suicides occur at the peak of a depressive episode
- As per the Center for Disease Control, suicide rate is 10.8 per 100,000 lives
- Cause of a suicide is very complicated; much more than the break up of a relationship
- Over 90% of those that take their life have a significant psychiatric illness at the time of their death



Risk Factors

- Previous suicide attempt
- History of depression
- History of substance abuse
- Family history of suicide
- Impulsive or aggressive tendencies
- Loss of a relationship, loved one, social network, employment, physical health, finances
- Easy access to lethal methods



Protective Factors

- Access to counseling and support
- Family and community support
- Skills in problem solving and conflict resolution
- Cultural and religious beliefs



Impact At The Workplace

When an employee dies by suicide:

- It is difficult to deal with a sudden and unexplainable death
- There is no opportunity to tie up "loose ends"
- Survivors ask where did they fail?



How Can You Help?

- A focus on work performance can be your guide
- Contact your Employee Assistance Program to speak confidentially with a consultant about your observations and concerns
- Strategize a response



Suicide - Know The Warning Signs

- Changes in behavior, personality, or mood
- Verbal cues such as "What's the point of living?", "Soon you won't have to worry about me" or "Who cares if I'm dead anyway?"
- Expressing feelings that life is meaningless or hopeless
- Giving away cherished possessions
- Neglect of appearance or hygiene
- Sudden unexplained deterioration of work performance or productivity



Responding to Warning Signs

- If an employee confides to you their suicidal ideas or plans, share that information with an appropriate resource – don't keep it to yourself.
- Find help. This may require mobilizing other co-workers or family, Security, local police, Human Resources, EAP
- The employee requires immediate help if there is any indication that they have been considering suicide or having suicidal thoughts
- Do not leave a suicidal person alone as they are in immediate danger



What Can a Supervisor Do?

- Learn about depression
- Know the sources of help available
- Recognize when an employee shows signs that might be depression-related
- Discuss changes in work performance with the employee, and listen to their concerns
- Don't diagnose the problem yourself

(continued)



What Can a Supervisor Do? (cont.)

- Recommend that the employee seek professional consultation
- Tell them about the EAP
- Be flexible about scheduling, to accommodate their seeking treatment
- Take any suicidal comments seriously and seek a consultation with the EAP yourself



How to Talk to a Depressed Partner, Friend or Co-worker About Seeking Help

- “You don’t have to feel that way. There are effective treatments”.
- Offer to research their benefits coverage and how it works (e.g. prior authorization)
- Offer to find a provider, schedule an appointment for them, even take them to it
- Help them get their prescription filled
- Encourage staying in treatment and/or continuing to take their medication
- If suicidal, call their therapist, or local mental health emergency services for help for them



Benefits of the EAP

- Face to Face Sessions
- Confidential
- Prepaid
- Unlimited Telephonic consultation
- Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Household benefit
- Work/Life Support such as eldercare, childcare and pet care.
- Financial Services
- Legal Services

