

Some Basic Facts About Depression

Unipolar depression and dysthymia are by far the most common forms of depression. (For definitions of these types of depression, see [What Is Depression?](#) in this blog.) The World Health Organization currently rates depression as the 4th leading cause of human suffering; behind heart attack, cancer, and traffic accidents. They estimate it will be the 2nd most debilitating human condition by the year 2020. This, despite the billions of dollars spent each year on anti-depressant medication. Clearly, unipolar depression and dysthymia are more than a "chemical imbalance" requiring anti-depressant medications; as drug manufacturers would lead us to believe!

If this was the case...and depression were purely a chemical imbalance, rates of depression in our culture would be declining and not escalating at an alarming rate!

Some other basic facts about unipolar depression:

It is the most common mood disorder in the U.S., with an estimated impact on the U.S. economy of over 40 billion dollars per year.

About twice as many women as men are diagnosed with depression.

The average age of onset is the mid-20's and dropping. Depression is most prevalent in the 25-45 age range.

Adolescents are the fastest growing age group of depression sufferers.

Depression is socially contagious. Children of depressed parents are more likely to develop depression in early adulthood. This is due more to learning than genetics. Parents with depression tend to model ineffective stress coping skills and depressive thinking, increasing the susceptibility for depression in their children.

Depression is well-understood and very treatable. Unfortunately, only about 25% of depressed individuals seek treatment; the rest suffer needlessly.

There is a stigma that remains in our culture around seeking psychological services. That is not only unfortunate, it is ignorant; good psychological counseling is about learning how to utilize and maximize one's mental and emotional resources.

Does it make any sense to suffer needlessly, because of an unwillingness to learn something new? In my world, learning is lifelong, and personal growth is a sign of mental health and emotional maturity. That's my point of view and I'm sticking to it!