

Risk Factors For Depression

A risk factor for depression is any factor which increases the likelihood of a depressive episode occurring. Research on depression has identified numerous risk factors. In his book, *Treating Depression With Hypnosis* (pg 33), Dr. Michael Yapko identifies nine psycho-social risk factors for depression. These nine include...stressful life circumstances, marital conflicts, physical/sexual abuse (past or present), economic deprivation, social skills deficits, problem solving deficits, emotional skills deficits, dysfunctional thinking, and co-morbid mental conditions (such as panic disorder, anxiety).

Well designed treatment plans for depression do not focus just on symptom relief. They focus on targeting and reducing the underlying risk factors that leave the client vulnerable to future depressive episodes. This is the biggest difference between psychological and medical therapy for depression.

The bottom line...Anti-depressant medications do a good job of relieving depressive symptoms, so one can "roll up their sleeves" and go to work on the underlying issues that are triggering depression. No amount of medication can reduce the marital conflict, build social skills, or change depressive thinking patterns.

Treating depression successfully is not about choosing between medical or psychological interventions. A combination of medication and good psychotherapy (cognitive behavioral therapy) is the most powerful therapeutic combination.

The majority of my clients struggling with depression are referred through their physician and are already taking anti-depressant medications. The ability to taper off the medications is generally achieved within 4-6 months. This is done in coordination with their referring physician.