



Depression— How to Fill Your Potholes

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Definition

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Two weeks or longer during which there is either depressed mood or loss of interest or pleasure, and at least four other symptoms that reflect a change in functioning, such as problems with:

- **Sleep**
- **Eating**
- **Energy**
- **Concentration**
- **Self-image**



Description

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A mood disorder causing a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest that affects how you think, feel, and behave; can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems

***Anhedonia*, a core clinical feature of depression, is an inability to experience pleasure in normally pleasant acts, which may lead to the perception that life isn't even worth living**



Global Estimates

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Affects 121 million people worldwide

Major depression carries the heaviest burden of disability among mental and behavioral disorders

World Health Organization (WHO 2010)

More females are diagnosed

Males may be equally impacted but fewer seek help; their symptoms differ and may be missed even when they do see a healthcare professional

Prevalence in USA

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Major depression is one of the most common mental disorders in the United States

2014: an estimated 15.7 million adults aged 18 or older had at least one Major Depressive Episode (MDE) in the past year



- Depression is a leading cause of disability and of divorce**
- Depression impacts all genders, races, ages, backgrounds, and economic groups**

Types of Depression

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Metaphorically, think of depression as a sense of feeling sunk down or hollow



- ☒ Situational depression – you feel sunk down for a while but recover in a timely manner (stressful life event)**
- ☒ Clinical depression – you feel sunk down for a long time and are unable to recover in a timely manner without help (may or may not involve a stressful life event)**

Contributors to Depression

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- **Stressors: and lack of skill in dealing with them**
- **Learned helplessness: one failure and globalize**
- **Habit patterns: often learned in childhood and may involve low levels of Emotional Intelligence**
- **Cellular memories: Who was joyful, angry, fearful, or sad in your biological family?**
- **Chemical imbalances (e.g., serotonin, hormones, stress chemicals like CRF)**
- **Brain downshifting often due to fear/anxiety**



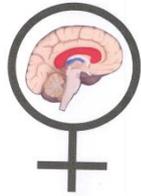
Pothole Metaphor

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A pothole is a hollow, an area sunk below its surroundings

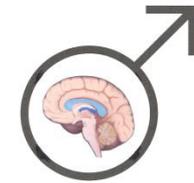
- **Small potholes can result in a rough ride, suspension-system distress, discomfort, etc.**
- **Large potholes can damage tires and wheels, stress alignment, interfere with travel, and contribute to accidents and injuries**





Gender Differences

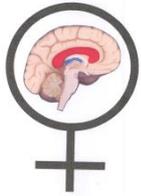
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Symptoms of depression are more likely to show up during teens and 20s, and around menopause

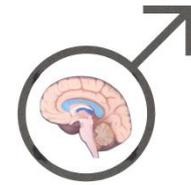
Symptoms of depression tend to show up at andropause in 40s and 50s (a root cause for divorce, 3 times higher suicide rate)

Statistically it requires 10 years and 3 different health professionals to properly diagnose depression in males



Common Symptoms

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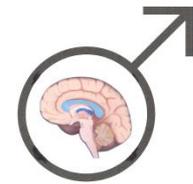


- **Feel 'blue'**
- **Turn inward**
- **Blame self**
- **Feel sad**
- **Afraid, anxious**
- **Avoid conflict**
- **Procrastinate**
- **Sleep too much**
- **Are 'irritable'**
- **Act out**
- **Blame others**
- **Experience anger**
- **Suspicious, guarded**
- **Create conflict**
- **Compulsive**
- **Sleep too little**



Symptoms, Cont'd

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- **Difficulty with boundaries**
- **Feel guilty (real or imagined)**
- **Self-medicate (food, alcohol)**
- **Isolate or withdraw**
- **May become controlling and breach boundaries**
- **Experience shame (low libido and sex performance)**
- **Self-medicate (sex, alcohol, food)**
- **Overuse TV or internet sites**

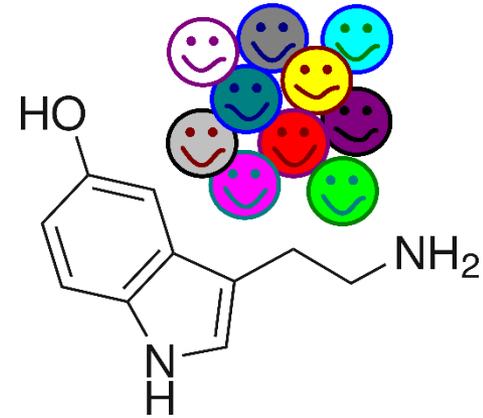
Role of Serotonin

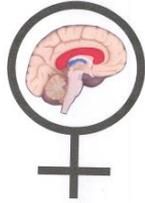
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Serotonin is sometimes referred to as the *happiness hormone* although it is a neurotransmitter

90% of the body's supply is in the GI Tract where it regulates intestinal movements (GI upsets are distressing and depressing)

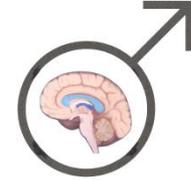
The remaining serotonin is in the brain and central nervous system where it regulates appetite, sleep, muscle contractions, and mood, among other things





Serotonin and Gender

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Lower serotonin levels overall - a higher fat to muscle ratio

Often have more serotonin receptors but fewer reuptake transporters

Higher serotonin levels overall - 40% of body mass is muscle

Muscle tissue doesn't use tryptophan per se, the precursor to serotonin, so males have more tryptophan / serotonin available

Serotonin Research

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Altered serotonin levels may also be linked with:



- **Migraine headaches**
- **Addictive behaviors**
- **Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)**
- **Anxiety, panic, excess anger**
- **Depression**

Defective serotonin signaling in the brain (low brain-stem levels) may be the underlying cause of sudden infant death syndrome or SIDS

Pothole 1 – Lack of Knowledge

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Learn about depression and contributing factors, especially as it relates to your gender, age, race, and culture, including:

- **Stressful life events**
- **Use of alcohol and drugs**
- **Unemployment**
- **Relationship termination**
- **Catastrophic illness**
- **Negative thinking and mindset**



Knowledge Lack, Cont'd

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A brain that has been trained to respond with depression can be retrained ...



Depression makes you overly sensitive to small triggers, leading to a sense of helpless resignation. But if you act early, before you reach this stage, you have room to manage an everyday stress and the energy to carry out your decision to do so... head the depression response off at the pass

—Tanzi & Chopra

Pothole 2 – Inherited

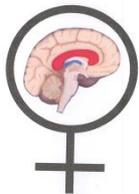
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Identify any familial tendency for depression—forewarned is forearmed!

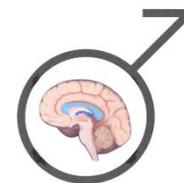
- ✓ **Genetics – chromosomes, genes; genetic effect may become more pronounced with age in females**
- ✓ **Epigenetic inheritance – cellular memory**

Studies: Up to 50% of depressed individuals reported that at least one parent, if not both, were depressive



Pothole 3 – Hormones

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Hormones (and hormone imbalances) can have an enormous impact on mood, sleep, and serotonin

Low estrogen levels may ↓ levels of serotonin

Very high or very low levels of cortisol may ↑ the risk for depression

Low thyroid hormone T3 may ↓ serotonin levels

Low testosterone levels ↑ likelihood of a diagnosis of depression by 400%

Some antidepressants may ↓ libido

Hormones, Cont'd

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Hormone imbalances are almost a given during:

- ❖ **Perimenopause**
- ❖ **Andropause**



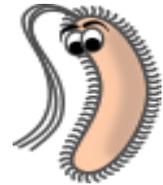
Depression in males is more likely to occur when hormone levels are out of balance; males may need to have their hormone levels tested

Pothole 4 – Illnesses

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Medical illnesses may underlie 10-15 percent of cases of depression and/or contribute to depressive symptoms, including:

- **Alzheimer's disease**
- **Cancer**
- **Diabetes**
- **Heart attacks**
- **Hypothyroidism**
- **Multiple Sclerosis**
- **Parkinson's disease**
- **Vitamin B₁₂ deficiency**



Depression has been linked with slower recovery after a heart attack and an increased risk for heart problems in the future

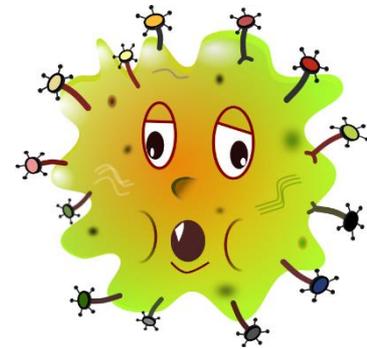
Pothole 5 – Negative Thinking

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Identify any familial tendency or habit patterns related to critical or hopeless / helpless thinking, or a negative mindset (fear or anxiety can downshift the brain)

Serotonin levels fall when you think or speak negatively and hang onto a negative mindset

Energy levels, outlook on life, and a sense of joy and contentment fall, as well



Positive Mindset

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Choose the thoughts you hang onto and develop a positive mindset and positive self-talk

Identify something you appreciate and dwelling on positive thoughts—you can banish fear, avoid burning up serotonin, and increase your energy levels



Your habitual attitudes form neural circuits in the brain—if you choose to maintain a specific attitude, the brain can literally rewire itself to facilitate that attitude

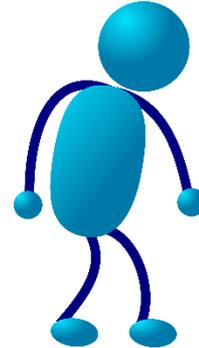
**—Doc Childre, Howard Martin
*The HeartMath Solution***

Pothole 6 – Unbalanced Life

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Live a balanced Longevity Lifestyle

- ▶ **Every period of exhaustion is followed by a corresponding period of depression**
- ▶ **Females are more vulnerable to diet-induced low serotonin (crash or very low calorie diets); and to inadequate micronutrition, especially a B-Vitamin deficiency**

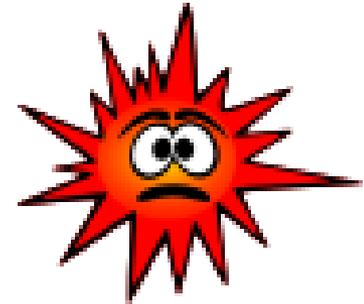


Unbalanced Life, Cont'd

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▶ **Stop exposing yourself to repeated, unpredictable, stressors over which you have little if any control**

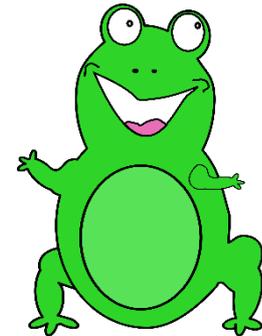
- **Abusive rage-aholic partner**
- **A boss who flies into rages**
- **A spouse who has a pattern of cheating**
- **Jobs where any customer may lash out or slam the door in your face**



Unbalanced, Cont'd

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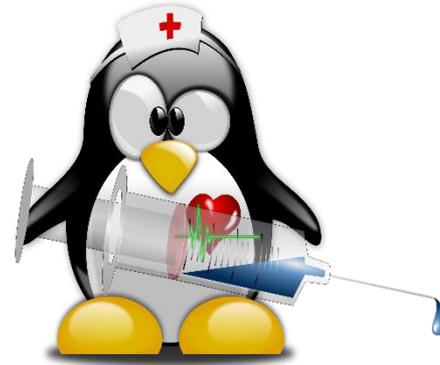
- ▶ **Increase predictable routines that help to defend against stress**
 - **Regular mental and physical exercise**
 - **Steady support system / relationships**
 - **Steady and positive work situation**
 - **Appropriate micronutrition**
 - **Sufficient water intake**
 - **Time to sleep and play**
 - **Dealing with problems promptly, directly, and effectively**



Pothole #7 – Refusal to Medicate

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You may need medication for a time to ‘put a floor under you,’ while you hone strategies for positive thinking and self-talk and create a healthier lifestyle



It can take 9-12 months to build up serotonin levels by living a Longevity Lifestyle that includes physical exercise and activity—some are too depressed to do this without medication

Fill Those Potholes!

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- ◆ **Live a proactively preventive Longevity Lifestyle**
- ◆ **Avoid getting caught in the trap of shame or blame or false guilt**
- ◆ **If you develop symptoms of depression that last for two weeks, consult with qualified healthcare professionals and get a physical exam (search until you find a good match with your brain)**



Take responsibility for your life and for the brain and body that have been leased to you for use on this planet