

Differences in how Depression looks for Men and for Women

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Depression hits 16 million adults at least once throughout their lifetime – that is at least 11% of the U.S. population. That percentage increases to nearly 20% in adults over the age of 65, and adolescents suffer depression at a huge 70% rate, while 30% of college students report feeling depressed enough to interfere with their ability to function in school.

When we commonly think of depression, symptoms that come to mind are sadness, hopelessness, lack of motivation, loss of pleasure in activities and hobbies, changes in appetite, sleep disturbances, feelings of guilt or difficulty concentrating. These general symptoms are common to both men and women. However, what is often misunderstood is that not all people with depression show visible signs of emotion.

Keeping in mind that the differing symptoms between men and women are definite generalizations, women's depression is often expressed in more visible symptoms of sadness including isolation, crying and other visible indicators of depression. Women may also tend to sleep excessively, over or under-eat.

Men, on the other hand, often show more irritability and inappropriate or intense anger as signs of depression. They may use alcohol or drugs in excess or engage in risky behaviors more to mask the signs. They may also try to escape their feelings of depression by working late, playing a lot of video games, working out excessively, or playing sports more often than usual.

If you are a friend or spouse of a man or woman who is depressed, it is important to note these differences between the genders. It is also important to encourage your loved one to look for some short-term therapy. With the large numbers of people facing depression each year, it is not a sign of weakness to seek help for depression. Unfortunately, in our culture that idea is a huge stumbling block to men seeking help for depression.

A professional, licensed mental health therapist can help uncover not only some of the signs of depression. A therapist can help your loved one gain some valuable coping strategies for alleviating depressive symptoms and overcome underlying self-talk /beliefs that feed into making depression feel that much worse. A trained counselor will also know when to suggest a client check with their family doctor about the possibility of short-term anti-depressant medication treatment. With more serious depression, combining talk therapy with medication has been found to be the most effective method of relieving depression misery as the client works toward overcoming the thoughts that perpetuate their depression.