

Emotional Problems: Depression, Anxiety, and Anger



Everyone feels sad, worried, or upset from time to time. But if these feelings last for a long time or begin to disrupt your life, treatment such as counseling or medicines can help get things back to normal.

Without treatment, these problems may get worse. They can also cause other physical and emotional health problems or make them worse.

What causes emotional health problems?

Emotional health problems are caused by changes in brain chemicals. They are not a character flaw. And they do not mean that you are a bad or weak person or that you are going crazy.

These types of problems can run in families. They can be triggered by physical stress (such as an illness or injury) or by emotional stress (such as the loss of a loved one). They can occur because you have a long-term (chronic) health problem, such as diabetes, cancer, or chronic pain. Sometimes they start without a clear reason.

Depression

Depression is a medical illness that affects how you feel, think, and act. It is more than just "the blues" or short-term feelings of grief or low energy. It can have a big impact on your life, your work, your health, and the people you care about.

Depression is a very common problem for men and women of all ages. It can be mild or severe. It may come and go, or it may last for a long time. A person may get depressed only once or many times.

You might be depressed if:

- You feel sad or hopeless.
- You feel little interest or pleasure in life.

Watch for these other signs of depression:

- You gain or lose a lot of weight.
- You have trouble sleeping, or you sleep too much.
- You feel restless.
- You feel tired all the time.
- You feel worthless or very guilty.
- You have trouble with focus, memory, or choices.
- You think often about death or suicide.

If you think you may be depressed, see your doctor for help.

Depression usually gets better with medicines or counseling. If you are too depressed to take care of yourself, or you are suicidal, you may need to stay in a hospital.

Anxiety

Everyone worries or feels a little nervous from time to time. A little anxiety can even help you focus. But too much anxiety—or anxiety that causes problems with daily life—is not normal.

Some people feel too anxious only at certain times, while other people feel anxious most of the time. Either kind of anxiety can make you feel helpless, confused, or worried.

Sometimes anxiety is a sign of another problem, such as depression or too much stress. Medicines and/or counseling can treat anxiety.

Anger and hostility

Anger tells your body to get ready for a fight. This is sometimes called a "fight or flight" response. When you get angry, hormones in your blood raise your blood pressure. Your heart beats faster, and you breathe harder.

This is a normal reaction to stressful moments. It can even be useful if you need to react quickly to danger. At times it can even be okay to express your anger. But if you feel angry often, or at times when there is no reason to be upset, you may have a problem.

Hostility is being ready for a fight all the time. Hostile people may be stubborn, impatient, hot-headed, or have an "attitude." They may get into fights or feel like hitting something or someone. Hostility keeps you apart from other people.

Too much anger or hostility can keep your blood pressure high and may raise your chances of having another health problem, such as depression, a heart attack, or a stroke. If you have trouble with anger or hostility, counseling can help you learn better ways to cope with stress, your feelings, and other people.

Getting help

Talk with your doctor to see whether you need treatment for emotional health problems. Many people do not get help because they are embarrassed or think that they will get over it on their own. This is too bad, because treatment works well for most people.

Talk with your doctor or another health professional right away if:

- Your symptoms become severe or disrupt your daily life.
- Your symptoms cause problems with other people.
- You have symptoms that do not get better over time.
- You are thinking about hurting yourself or someone else.