

Choice

Health & Wellbeing



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Your bodywork blueprint for massage success

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Your Health and Wellbeing Success Starts Here!

Are you a health-conscious consumer, looking to come into the industry or looking for a suitable treatment? Find out what the experts say and read.

Depression



Depression is an illness that can affect anyone at any time; it is also known as major depression, major depressive disorder, clinical depression, or unipolar depression. Depression is classed as a disease and is treatable.

It is thought that 10% of the population are depressed at any given time and two thirds of those won't realise that they have a treatable disease. So, approximately one in six people will be depressed at some time in their lives. One in twenty will be clinically depressed.

Feeling low and fed up for a short while is perfectly normal; everyone has those feelings at some point in their life. For most people, these feelings will pass. However, for some, the black clouds of depression can hang around for many months and even years. Life can become a daily struggle. This is known as major depression and is also known as clinical depression.

Who suffers from depression?

Anyone at any age can be affected, although figures suggest that women are more likely than men to become depressed. Men usually struggle more with the condition, as they can find it harder to admit to or talk about the problem.

There are many different types of depression:

Post Natal Depression, S.A.D (Seasonal Affective Disorder), Bipolar Disorder – Manic Depression.

Possible Causes

There are many reasons why some people suffer from depression: bereavement, divorce, separation from a partner or family, loss of job or business, alcohol /drugs, illness such as cancer, stroke, heart attack, thyroid malfunction, a physical attack, trauma, childhood problems, certain events in our lives, such as children leaving home, and many more. Learned behaviour patterns from childhood or not having the correct skills to cope when things go wrong can also be factors.

Diet can be a contributing factor; either a poor diet or specific types of food can contribute to depression. Alcohol can be included in this category.

However, often the hardest to treat is the depression that occurs for no apparent reason.

Chemical imbalances that occur in the brain and body are still being researched as to whether they cause depression. There is also research to do with whether the chemical imbalance is the result of the depression or illness and anxiety itself.

An under-active thyroid can cause symptoms of tiredness and you may put on weight and feel depressed. If the thyroid is over-active, the symptoms can be mania-like; restlessness, loss of weight and other symptoms that are similar to someone who is manic.

Many people who are depressed are often anxious, but again, it's not known whether anxiety can cause the depression or if the depression is caused by the anxiety.

Research is on-going but depression is not thought to necessarily be a genetic condition, apart from the possible exception of manic depression. Family background and upbringing will naturally influence our lives and emotions, so some people may be more susceptible to different forms of depression than others. Just as some people can cope better with dealing with it.

Symptoms!

Symptoms can vary from one person to another and each person will be affected differently. At different times, those who are depressed will present some of the following symptoms but not necessarily all:

- ☹️ Broken sleep, difficulty sleeping
- ☹️ Lack of energy, feeling tired, sleeping too much
- ☹️ Very emotional; crying suddenly and for no apparent reason
- ☹️ Drinking alcohol or taking medication / drugs more than normal
- ☹️ Difficulty concentrating, making decisions and remembering things
- ☹️ Lack of confidence and self esteem
- ☹️ Feeling guilty, self-blame
- ☹️ Negative thoughts, dwelling on things or the

past ☹️ Feeling helpless ☹️ Refusing support, distancing from friends / people ☹️ Physical aches and pains, without cause ☹️ Feeling numb, empty and despairing ☹️ Loss of interest in life in general and the activities of day-to-day life ☹️ Lack of physical activity ☹️ Self-harming ☹️ Suicidal feelings

Chemical effects that occur in the brain

Research is still continuing about the chemical changes that occur in the brain during depression. It is thought that special chemicals called neurotransmitters in the brain transmit messages throughout the structure of the brain's nerve cells. These carry out very important and specific functions in a very organised way. Each of us has between ten billion and 100 billion neurons in our brain.

Chemical messages either change into chemical impulses on the next neuron or stop where they are. In either case, the neurotransmitter releases the receptor from the site and floats back into the synapse. Either the neurotransmitter may be broken down by a chemical called monoamine oxide or it may be taken back in by the neuron that released it. This is called 'reuptake'.

Of the 30 neurotransmitters, three have been identified that have been associated with clinical depression. These are serotonin, norepinephrine and dopamine, and are responsible for emotions, appetite, sleep, and reactions to stress. Areas of the brain that have received attention from researchers of depression are the limbic system and the hypothalamus.

Treatments available

While there are many treatments available, antidepressants are still the most commonly used and work on chemical messengers to the brain, to help lift mood. Counselling and psychotherapy are widely used and can be very effective. Self-

help remedies can also help and are more encouraged by GPs today than in the past. A good diet and regular daily exercise have proved to be very effective in relieving symptoms of depression.

Aromatherapy

Our sense of smell is closely linked with the emotional centres in the brain and stimulates the endocrine and limbic system linked with depression. We all know that a beautiful aroma can provoke many feelings; uplifting, happy, relaxed, more awake, invigorated. Aromatherapy treatments can help through touch alone and can be extremely therapeutic for the client but can induce a range of emotions and feelings.

Although there are specific oils that are natural antidepressants, each client will have different needs, depending on the underlying cause of the depression, or which symptoms are affecting them most. Other conditions that the client may be suffering from will also determine which oils can be used.

Caution must be taken by pregnant women who can only be treated with certain essential oils. This varies at different stages of pregnancy and the women should get advice from their G.P. / Midwife.

Essential oils that can help

Essential oils that can relieve symptoms of depression and have anti-depressant properties are: bergamot, clary sage, frankincense, geranium, grapefruit, helichrysum, jasmine,



lavandin, lavender, lavender spike, lemongrass, litsea cubeba, melissa, neroli, orange, patchouli, petitgrain, rose, rosemary, ylang ylang.

Although all of the above oils have anti-depressant properties, please remember they would not necessarily be suitable for every client. This is a good opportunity to allow a client to sample the different oils to see which ones they prefer before they have their treatment and so they can gain the maximum benefit for both physical and emotional wellbeing.

Aromatherapy in its true form can be beneficial and unique to a client suffering from depression, as so many symptoms and aspects of the client's needs can be addressed. Both physical and emotional needs can be helped at different levels, through massage and the use of

the appropriate essential oils. A detailed consultation may well help a therapist to get clues as to why a client is suffering from depression. Clients may not know or even realise they are suffering or they simply may be reluctant to discuss the possible reasons for their depression.

Studies with brain wave frequency have shown that smelling lavender can increase alpha waves in the back of the brain which are associated with relaxation. The fragrance of jasmine increases beta waves in the front of the brain which are associated with a more alert state.

St John's Wort (*Hypericum Perforatum*)

Although not an essential oil, St John's Wort can be used as a carrier oil or taken in tablet form. It is worth noting that St John's Wort can be very beneficial in relieving symptoms of mild depression. It is a herb that has been used since medieval times, and well known for its mood lifting properties. It is regularly prescribed in Europe, especially in Germany, in tablet form to help with mild depression, mainly with younger patients. It can cause various side effects, such as dizziness, fatigue, upset stomach. People who are bi-polar should use it with caution, as it can cause hypermania; rapid switching of high to a low mood. Consult your Medical Practitioner for advice, especially if already taking other medication. There have also been some concerns with those taking Thyroxine who should not take St John's Wort. Again, consult your Medical Practitioner.

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Exercise

The medical profession is now more pro-active about promoting exercise to help ease the symptoms of depression than it has been in the past.

Medical evidence shows the release of various hormones (adrenalin, endorphins, enkephalins, testosterone, serotonin and thyroxine (T3 & T4)) from exercise has a positive effect on the body. Hormones are the chemical messengers, released by the pituitary gland and controlled by the hypothalamus, that regulate the body.

Endorphins are the body's natural painkillers and can produce a euphoric state of mind and even mask pain.

Serotonin is produced in the brain and is a neurotransmitter that sends messages from one part of the brain to the other as well as all over the body and is linked to mood levels, sleeping and waking up. Tryptohan produces serotonin, so if this process does not occur, or if there is an

imbalance, it is thought that it can lead to depression.

Exercise can not only relieve symptoms of stress and anxiety that caused the depression in the first place but can help relieve the symptoms of depression and help the body to cope more effectively. Life for many people seems naturally stressed. It is hard in today's society to avoid or escape any stress. Much of it we did not experience on a daily basis, even just a few years ago and it is thought that many of us stay in the 'fight or flight' mode. The stress and anxiety caused and hormones that are released into the body as a result of this can cause many health issues and have a detrimental effect on the body as it struggles to cope. The body needs to have coping mechanisms in place to be able to absorb and deal with all we expect of it in our busy and hectic lives.

We all need to equip and protect ourselves so that our body not only can cope with stress, but simply by being around negative energies we can learn to try not to absorb them all.

Don't forget to relax, switch off, and enjoy life

and the people you share it with. Make time for yourself and others. Be good to yourself. So eat, drink, exercise, use essential oils and be happy!!

CHW

Sources:

'Mind, Natural Pages'
'Boots Web Md'
'All About Depression'

© **Written by Pam Wilson, on behalf of The International Federation of Aromatherapists. If you would like more information about professional aromatherapy, are interested in training to become an aromatherapist or would like to find a qualified aromatherapy practitioner in your area please go to the International Federation of Aromatherapists (IFA) website at www.ifaroma.org or email at office@ifaroma.org**

Scents and scentability

Aromatherapy and perfumery



Isn't it truly amazing how our sense of smell can evoke different moods, memories and can even stimulate a craving for a favourite food or drink?

The psychological effects of fragrance have long been recognised, while herbs have probably been used for their specific effects by so-called primitive people since the dawn of time. It is certain that in the past natural aromatic substances were often used successfully for their hallucinogenic, sedative, stimulating or anaesthetising effects on the mind.

Psycho-aromatherapy focuses primarily on the psychological potential of essential oils and consists of two separate but interrelated fields – aromatic medicine and perfumery. In psycho-aromatherapy, the physiological effect of specific essential oils on the systems of the body is combined with the individual's emotional or psychological reaction to their fragrance.