

## What Is Depression?

**Depression is categorized by the mental health profession as a mood disorder.** However, the symptoms vary widely, and impact mental, emotional, behavioral, physical, and social functioning.

Depression can affect the body, behavior, interpersonal relationships, mental abilities, and emotions. Let's get into the specifics of each:

**The Body**--Generates physical symptoms which include insomnia, fatigue, loss of appetite, weight-loss or gain, lower sex drive, increase in aches and pains.

**Behavior**--Leading to drug or alcohol abuse, self-destructive behaviors, loss of interest in pleasurable activities, and/or loss of initiative and work performance.

**Interpersonal Relationships**--Creates marital and family distress.

**Mental Abilities**--Diminishes one's ability to think critically and clearly, to sustain concentration, and to make good decisions.

**Emotions**--Feelings of worthlessness, guilt, or hopelessness. Anxiety, worry, and irritability are also common.

**"Unipolar"** depression is by far the most common form, and is estimated to affect over 20 million Americans each year. It is called "unipolar" because it affects only one end of the mood continuum--a sad, blue, or depressed mood. In contrast is **"bi-polar"** depression (formerly known as manic depression), which affects both ends of the continuum--with depressed moods and euphoria, or manic episodes.

Depression can also present itself as dysthymia, a less intense, but more chronic form of depression.

Research evidence suggests that bi-polar depression is biologically driven and requires accurate diagnosis and medical treatment to manage. Unipolar depression and dysthymia, on the other hand, are primarily psychological driven; the result of depressive thinking styles, poor coping strategies, and social and interpersonal stress. While anti-depressant medications help reduce symptoms of fatigue, feelings of hopelessness, and/or insomnia, they do nothing to address the underlying psychological causes of the depression.

A form of counseling, known as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), has been shown to be highly effective in changing the thinking and coping styles that create unipolar depression and dysthymia. CBT is the treatment of choice for these types of depression. I often utilize hypnosis in conjunction with CBT to enhance and facilitate therapeutic results. By doing so, I can often accomplish therapeutic goals quicker and easier.