***What is depression and how is it treated?***  Written by Dr. Olav Opedal, psychologists & VFW Post 683 Surgeon 

Depression is a serious and unfortunately common mood disorder. Depression is manifested by a persistent feeling of sadness and hopelessness. Individuals with depression tend to lose interest in activities they used to enjoy. Depression can sometimes be presented as chronic pain or digestive issues. For someone to be diagnosed with the depression, the following symptoms must have been present for a minimum of two weeks:

• Depressed mood most of the day, every day.

• Markedly diminished interest or pleasure in all, or all, activities most of the day, every day.

• Significant weight loss when not dieting or weight gain or decrease or increase in appetite every day.

• A slowing down of thought and a reduction of physical movement (observable by others, not merely subjective feelings of restlessness or being slowed down).

• Fatigue or loss of energy every day.

• Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt every day.

• Diminished ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness, every day.

• Recurrent thoughts of death, recurrent suicidal ideation without a specific plan, or a suicide attempt or a specific plan for committing suicide.

If you or your loved one have thoughts of suicide, please call the National Suicide Prevention hotline: 800-273-8255. The hotline is available 24 hours a day.

The good news is that depression is a treatable condition and that the VA has many resources available. Living with depression during the pandemic has additional challenges. The VA (nd) has published the following self-help tips:

1. Maintain a structured day that includes healthy eating habits, getting enough sleep, and make sure to exercise

2. Set alarms to take your prescribed medicines

3. Listen to your favorite music and take walks

4. Reduce your intake of alcohol

5. Stay in contact with friends and family

6. Focus on what is in your control and reduce news intake

7. Take deep breaths, cook your favorite meal, and talk to your loved ones

Resources:

<https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/depression/index.asp?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=search-va-depression&utm_content=treatments-and-programs&utm_term=va%20depression&gclid=Cj0KCQjw3IqSBhCoARIsAMBkTb05QNaz7-Y7a7kAyyRtNPHgwBsNtmrKFgopzPtMY6DM6c55VyszjikaAipOEALw_wcB>

<https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/coronavirus/Managing_Depression_During_the_Coronavirus_Pandemic-508.pdf>

Veterans Crisis Line: 800-273-8255

 
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