PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

DEPRESSIVE DISORDERS

Depressive disorders are a group of mood disorders characterised primarily by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and a loss of interest in activities that one typically enjoys. These disorders can significantly affect a person's emotional and physical well-being, making it difficult to carry out daily activities. Living with depression of any kind is challenging and can be serious, but it is highly treatable, and with the right treatment and support many people achieve significant improvement or full remission. Common symptoms include extreme and persistent sadness, hopelessness, fatigue, and changes in sleep/appetite.

Other forms of depression could include postpartum depression, Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), and Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder

1 Major Depressive Disorder

Also known as clinical depression, MDD is prolonged and intense episodes of sadness and despair lasting at least two weeks. Symptoms may include low energy, feelings of worthlessness or guilt, difficulty concentrating, changes in sleep and appetite, and thoughts of self-harm or suicide.

2 Bipolar Disorder

Previously called manic-depressive disorder or manic depression, bipolar disorder involves cycles of depression and mania or hypomania (elevated mood). Depressive episodes in bipolar disorder can resemble major depression but are punctuated by episodes of mania.

3 Persistent Depressive Disorder

PDD is milder, chronic form of depression where symptoms last for at least two years. People with PDD experience periods of low mood, low self-esteem, and fatigue that may fluctuate but never fully subsides for long.

Potential Causes and Risk Factors

- Genetics and a family history of depression
- Imbalances in neurotransmitters (e.g. serotonin)
- Hormonal changes, inflammation, and structural differences in the brain
- Personality traits such as low self-esteem, negative thinking, and a high sensitivity to stress
- Trauma, loss, chronic illness, substance use, and stressful life events
- Loneliness, lack of support, and social/ cultural pressures

Treatment

- Therapy such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) or Exposure Therapy
- Medication such as antidepressants
- Lifestyle changes such as regular exercise, a healthy diet, and adequate sleep
- Alternative therapies such as yoga, mindfulness and meditation
- Access to support groups
- Severe cases may require hospitalisation

For more information, make sure you contact your GP or visit the NHS website