

Depression

(डिप्रेशन)

Anil Vartak (Ph.D.)



**Dark Clouds of Depression can be overcome.
Come let us talk & walk towards light.**

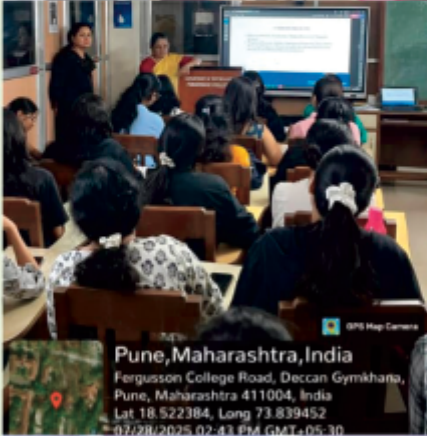


Eklavya Foundation for Mental Health

Recent Awareness Programmes In Action



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Eklavya Foundation for Mental Health

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Anil Vartak has a Ph.D. degree in Mental Health Economics. He has been working in the mental health sector for the last 28 years. Drawing from his own experiences, he is a staunch advocate of self-help methods for recovery from mental illness. He is the Founder President of Eklavya Foundation for Mental Health, Pune

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Foreword

This booklet on Depression, written by Dr. Anil Vartak, PhD, Founder President of Eklavya Foundation for Mental Health, gives precise, brief, and useful information.

According to the WHO, Depression will be the most common illness globally in the next 20 years. But why think so much when each person has experienced extreme sorrow at some or the point of time in their lives. The reality of such times is written here.

The difference between occasional sorrow and depression, how to identify this difference, symptoms of the illness, treatments available, success of these treatments, various stereotypes, all this information is pinned down in a precise way in only 12 pages.

Among the treatments available for depression, the 'Recovery' method developed by Dr. Abraham Low is useful. Select information on the Recovery method is given here. A self administered questionnaire is also included in the booklet.

The booklet has two special features. Smita Godse has supported the writing. She has several years of experience in guiding persons with mental illness.

The language of the booklet is simple, and the information is easy to follow. This booklet will be useful to all those who want brief but accurate information on depression.

Dr. Ulhas Luktuke
Psychiatrist

Introduction

The previous booklet written for persons with mental illness and their families have received a good response so far, but more importantly, there was demand for these booklets from the patients of the Regional Mental Hospital in Yerawada, Pune. One thing that was clear from this response was that everyone, including poorer patients, wants information regarding mental illness and how to recover from it. Access to basic information enables patients and their families to make appropriate decisions, increases hope, encourages self-help, and initiates the path to recovery. Information relieves the patients and their families from unrealistic expectations, such as that the illness had not occurred, and thus sets them on the path of self improvement.

The WHO has said that 'depression' will be a leading illness of the 21st century. Ironically, because the symptoms of depression are milder than those of severe mental illnesses, they are harder to recognize and therefore get easily overlooked. For this reason alone, this booklet aims to give basic information regarding depression, its symptoms, options of medical treatments and psycho-social support systems, self-help, and means to encourage people to seek more information and assistance.

I thank my colleagues, Mr. Gurudatt Kundapurkar and Smita Godse, for helping me in all the stages of writing. I thank my mentor in the self-help field, Dr. Ulhas Luktuke, who has always treated me like a friend, for writing the Foreword of this booklet. I thank Dr. Rahul Sidhaye of Public Health Foundation Delhi, Mrs. Charuta Khamkar Dr. Rajesh Alone of Sigmund Freud Foundation, Pune, for reading and giving useful comments. I thank Dr. Sudha Paranjpe, President of the Self-Respect Association, for her donation to publish the previous edition of this booklet.

I hope that this booklet proves informative & useful and beacons hope for its readers, their family members, and friendstoo.

Anil Vartak (Ph.D)

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Some important tips for patients

- Depression indeed is an illness that can strike anyone at any age.
- Depression is an illness like any other. Treatments are available and with timely treatment patients can recover fully.
- Depression is not an illness brought upon by oneself or by one's weak will. Therefore, fear of stigma is unwarranted.
- However, other forms of major illnesses like cancer, heart diseases, could also cause depression.
- Depression does affect quality of life at the individual, family and societal levels.

Depression, a mental illness

Just as there are physical illnesses there are others which can broadly be categorized as mental or brain-related illnesses. About 1% of the population is affected by major mental health issues and approximately 5% to 6% by minor mental illnesses. Depression, though relatively a minor form of mental illness, is found to prevail in as much as about 5% of the population. Owing to this gravity, the World Health Organization has declared '21st Century as the 'Century of Depression.'

Temporary emotional disturbances caused by failure at examination or business, loss of a loved one etc. are not signs of a depression. However, if the person is not able to get out of such sorrow, unlike most of us are able to, but continues to sink deeper into it, then it can be said to be sure a sign of depression.

Symptoms of Depression

- **The symptoms of depression are :**
- Constant feeling of restlessness, drained or de-motivated
- Unusual slowing down in talking or in physical responses
- Distinct change in sleeping pattern, either too much or too little
- Significant changes in one's appetite and weight
- Unusual difficulties in concentration, recollection & decision making
- Constant sense of fatigue
- Over-powering sense of futility
- Feeling guilty for no reason
- Loss of interest in life and any of its activities
- Tormenting suicidal thoughts or even attempts.
- Generally, if majority of these symptoms are found to last for more than a fortnight, they strongly indicate prevalence of depression in the person and the urgent need for seeking professional help.

Impact of Depression

Depression may be considered only as an aberration, yet it impacts one's life considerably at the three different levels.

Individual : An affected individual is forced to cope not only with sadness and emotional pain, lack of self-esteem, joys of day to day living but also economic dependence, etc.

Family : Living with one's family is the very back-bone of the Indian culture. Thus, mentally ill persons mostly live with their families. Consequently, such a family feels helpless, confused and unhappy. It is also engulfed by a deep sense of shame, blame and irritability.

At times the patient finds it difficult to retain one's job or even the caregiver's income generation may be affected owing to the caregiving responsibility.

Social : All the impediments enumerated earlier, both at the individual and family levels, cumulatively have a bearing on the productivity of the society & the nation as a whole.

Considering the socio-economic impact of the growing global incidence of depression, the WHO has projected that this will be the major illness of the century.

Causes of depression

Chemical imbalance in the brain or impact of traumatic experiences on the mind could trigger depression.

Biological factors : When the neurotransmitter count in the body changes, function of the brain is affected. Symptoms of depression appear either because of physical ailment or hormonal imbalance. Moreover, members of a family with high incidence of depression are found to be more vulnerable to suffering from this illness.

Psychological factors : An individual, facing acute stress, may be affected by depression. Failure at examination, loss in business, death of a close relative, war or natural disaster could also trigger great stress in persons. Although this results in chemical imbalance in the brain there are many of treatment options available for it.

Medication & Other Treatment Options

Treatment for depression can be broadly categorized into Medication and Talk Therapies.

Medication – Anti-depressant medicines are used to control the chemical imbalance in the brain and they do give relief. However, one may have to encounter and put up with the side effects such as vomiting sensation, sustained drowsiness, sexual problems which vary from person to person. Considering the long term gains of medication it is prudent to opt for it and bear with the temporary side effects.

Talk Therapies – This is a method wherein the talk therapist establishes rapport with the patient and helps him realize deficiencies in one's thoughts and behavior. This is followed by motivating him to take the corrective steps. Cognitive Behavior Therapy or Inter-personal Behavior Therapy is used for this purpose. Although this therapy helps one to find some relief from depression it may not solely be able to remove the deep set deficiencies.

It may be difficult for oneself to decide which of the two streams of these therapies is better. For some Talk Therapy alone proves adequate whereas for some others, both may have to be concurrently used for best outcome.

Some useful ways of self-help besides professional's treatment

- You may unburden your sorrow by speaking to someone trustworthy.
- Consult a doctor for a prompt and accurate diagnosis.
- Do physical exercises or activities as per your current capacity. These stimulate hormones in the brain that promote the feeling of well-being.

- Educate and update yourself about depression to know many other options available for your recovery.
- It is better for you to accept that your mood will keep improving gradually.
- Stick to simple, nutritious food that suits you.
- To stay motivated, lower your expectations by setting smaller, doable tasks.
- Do not isolate yourself. Rather spend time with supportive and encouraging friends and relatives.
- It will be only advisable to postpone taking any major decisions relating to education, career, marriage, relocating yourself etc., till you feel better.

Helpful tips for close relatives or friends of persons with depression

- Encourage the patient to promptly seek medical treatment and subsequent compliance with the professional's advice.
- Encourage him/her to speak out and listen attentively.
- Offer emotional support to your loved one. Never ignore or ridicule him/her at any time.
- Encourage your loved one to walk or to do some physical activity. Give him company but do not force him too much.
- Educate yourself as much as possible about depression. That will help you know of even more options available for his/her recovery.
- It will be motivating to make your loved one aware that his mood has shown improvement since commencement of the treatment.
- Neither ridicule nor ignore suicidal thoughts expressed by your loved one but promptly & appropriately inform the

therapist or the doctor.

- It is important to take care of yourself as a caregiver. Do spare time for yourself and your needs. Do not hesitate to share your responsibility with other family member and also take help of the experts before you feel a burnout by helping your loved one.

Well known persons with depression

Names of individuals who suffered from depression but excelled in different walks of life like literature, music, cinema and politics have been given here below. These examples clearly show that depression can strike anyone. These names have been sourced from official websites.

Outside India :

- Winston Churchill : Politician
- Abraham Lincoln : Politician
- Mark Twain : Writer
- Charles Dickens : Writer
- William Jones : Philologist
- Sigmund Freud - Psycho analyst
- Franz Kafka : Novelist
- Serena Williams: Tennis Player
- Ian Thorpe: Swimmer
- Andrew Flintoff : Cricketer

Within India :

- Deepika Padukone : Actress
- Shahrukh Khan : Actor
- Anushka Sharma : Actress
- Parveen Babi : Actress

Tips for Patients

Write your diary everyday: It is important to keep a note of activities done in a day or a list of to-do tasks. Likewise, it is also important to note down your mental state, reasons for mood, changes in events that led to changes and strategies which you found useful or thought to be useful. From the point of future, it is extremely useful to note down the efforts that you make to bring about improvements.

- **Don't stop medication on your own:** Take medicines regularly. Chemicals in the medicines mix with our blood and influence our body and the mind. They help to minimize symptoms of mental illness. Stopping medicines abruptly, without doctor's knowledge, is most likely to cause a relapse.

- **Improvement is not dosage related:** Patients are used to measuring improvements in their health based on the dose of the medicine. But improvement depends on to what extent we can function. So let the doctors decide the dose, let us focus on what and how we do to improve our health.

- **Do not fear your heredity:** Like several other illnesses, genetics is one of the components of mental illness. But in case of other health problems such as diabetes, heart problems, etc, role of genes is much stronger. Many patients have overcome symptoms of mental illness through their sheer determination, will power and persistence to improve.

- **At first, things improve in bits:** Recovery will be slow in the beginning. Do not expect dramatic improvements. Instead, set minor goals and focus on them. Try to complete them. If you find them difficult, set even smaller goals. It is possible to bring out big changes in the future through small steps taken one by one.

- **Keep yourself occupied:** No work is inferior. While recovering from mental illness, it does not matter what work you do. Do not

compare your previous education and profession with the work that you do now. Doing small tasks at hand brings back one's self-esteem and they build capacity to take on complex tasks in the future.

- **Others, too, have limitations:** While recovering from mental illness, one expects relatives and friends to be helpful and understanding all the time. Although this expectation may be quite valid, it must be remembered that others, too, have their limitations, and they, too, suffer because of their concern and efforts for you.

- **Join a self-help group:** A self-help group is formed by persons facing similar problems to help overcome these with mutual support. One feels lighter through sharing, but it is also an opportunity to learn from each other's experiences.

- **Eat and Exercise well**

Regular exercise and a balanced diet are more important for those with mental illness than for others, as they provide the support needed for mental and emotional rebuilding. Improper eating patterns can bring sluggishness and restlessness, causing work to be interrupted by lethargy and distraction. Any kind of exercise-walking, gym, or yoga-can help divert a mind from brooding and naturally diminishes outbursts of emotion. By disciplining the body to maintain physical well-being, you bring the body and mind in line, crossing an important milestone in organizing your mental processes.

- **Let us show Gratitude for all that we have**

In the stressful stage of living, mental illness can make one believe that nothing good is happening, but it is prudent to remember that, along with failures, many positive things have also happened in one's life. Having loving parents and concerned siblings, getting helpful friends, and even having beautiful nature around us is a matter of gratitude. Expressing gratitude about it, whether

through a verbal or mental acknowledgement, helps bring stability and peace of mind by substituting negative feelings with positive ones. This ever-growing path of gratitude is a healthy ideology and an indivisible part of the exhilarating journey toward recovery.

- **Learn to Face Difficulties**

Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of ways of overcoming it. Deep and lasting changes come from the heart, requiring the courage to recognize the need for change and the skill to view failures with a balance of mind. If we break a large problem into parts and deal with each one by one, it becomes possible to surmount a mound of difficulties. Change will be gradual, and we must celebrate small changes without getting overexcited, as real improvement is slow but permanent. By adopting an attitude of equanimity and utilizing self-help techniques, we can convert the regret of failure into the joy of learning and never, ever succumb to failure.

The Recovery Method

Dr. Abraham Low, a neuro-psychiatrist, while working in Illinois, US, mental hospital, realised that patients recover once the treatment is initiated in the hospital. However, once discharged from the hospital, many of them develop symptoms due to stress and strain while living with the family and in the society. This leads to rehospitalisation of many of them. Dr. Low developed a specific self-help method- Recovery Method - in order to enable patients to cope up with such stress. Patients learn skills to manage small day to day events rather than big issues in one's life. Patients create a broader pattern of their future progress while managing such small events. This method is based on the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy in psychology.

Some Important Tools From Recovery Method

These tools should be repeatedly recalled which help in controlling symptoms due to distressing events of day to day life.

- Maintaining inner peace is my supreme goal
- My internal peace is more important than my anger
- Setback is a part of life .I am an average person.
- I cannot control the external environment but only my internal environment.
- Illness is fate-appointed and not self-appointed
- We can break old habit patterns
- Fear feeds the symptoms and the symptoms feeds the fear
- Every act of self control leads to self respect
- Strive for peace, balance and order
- Lower your expectations, and performance will rise
- Nervous symptoms are distressing but not dangerous
- Feelings are not facts
- Helplessness is not hopelessness
- People do things that irritate us, not to irritate us.
- Endorse for the effort and not for the outcome
- Excuse rather accuse
- We can't control the outer environment, but we can control our reaction to it.
- Try-fail, try-fail, try-succeed.
- Fearful anticipation is worse than the realisation.
- Commanding your muscles to move transforms the vicious cycle of helplessness into the vitalizing cycle of self-confidence.

- Don't measure good mental health by how you feel. It is how you function.
- Thoughts can be rejected, suppressed, or dropped.
- Take the total view.
- Do it in part-acts.

Important information for the media

- On an average 4% to 5% of the total population may get afflicted by depression. Assuming 5 persons average per family, around 20 to 25 percent of total population suffer, directly or indirectly, by this illness.
- Depression is a real illness and it can occur to anyone and of any age
- Women are more susceptible to depression as compared to men.
- Like other physical illnesses depression is a physical illness. Treatments are available and timely treatment can help the patient fully recover.
- Depression is not an illness of self creation or due to lack of will-power. Hence, there is no reason to carry stigma about it.
- Depression and other physical illnesses are inter-related. Cancer, diabetes and heart ailments may induce symptoms of depression while depression can precipitate diabetes, cancer and heart ailments.
- Individual, family and society suffer at various levels due to depression.
- The economic losses due to depression are huge.
- Research indicates that among employees who often take leave from the workplace, those with depression account for a larger portion.
- In India the people who need treatment for depression but do not avail of it is as high as 80 percent. Even among them

invariably the treatment is delayed by approximately 5 to 10 years of its occurrence.

- Ignorance about depression and social stigma are the important reasons for delay in availing of the treatment.

Questionnaire to determine severity of depression

How often did the following issues trouble you in the past fortnight:

Issue	Not at all	Some -times	Often	Almost every day
Lesser interest/joy in performing routine matters	0	1	2	3
Defeated, Lazy or Feeling Disappointed	0	1	2	3
Sleep : Deprived, Excess or Disturbed,	0	1	2	3
Appetite normal, more or less than normal	0	1	2	3
Feeling tired or weak	0	1	2	3
Feeling unworthy, unsuccessful or feeling oneself short of family's expectations	0	1	2	3
Lack of interest in reading newspaper, watching TV or such diversions	0	1	2	3
Noticeable slowing down in walking or speaking; or, feeling extremely restless	0	1	2	3
Urge to hurt oneself or preferring death rather than live miserably	0	1	2	3
	Column Addition			
	Total		+	+

Interpretation of Indicators of self-evaluation & the urgency to seek help

Total score	Severity of depression
1-4	Very mild depression
5-9	Mild depression
10-14	Moderate depression
15-19	Severe depression
20-27	Very severe depression

Note : As this is based on initial self-assessment by a person it is necessary that it is reviewed by a professional for proper diagnosis. The professional can assess more accurately whether the respondent has understood the questionnaire and replied as required or not.

About Eklavya Foundation for Mental Health, Pune

The Eklavya Foundation for Mental Health was established in September 2021 by a group of committed volunteers with over 20 years of experience in the mental health field. The organization aims to raise awareness about mental health, promote self-help initiatives, and reduce the stigma associated with mental illnesses.

In Indian society, mental health is often misunderstood and surrounded by ignorance and stigma. As a result, many individuals experience delays in accessing professional mental health care or are deprived of timely treatment. Patients and their families frequently face a dual burden— coping with mental health symptoms while also dealing with negative societal attitudes, discrimination, and social exclusion.

To address these challenges, the Eklavya Foundation focuses on community awareness, peer-led self-help initiatives, and stigma reduction. Despite being a relatively new organization, Eklavya has introduced several innovative programs to achieve its objectives. Currently, the foundation runs three types of support groups:

- Support groups exclusively for persons with mental illness (patients)
- Support groups exclusively for caregivers
- Combined support groups for patients and caregivers.

The patient support groups follow the Recovery International (USA) recovery model. Several of Eklavya Foundation's innovative programs are receiving very enthusiastic responses from the patients, their families, students, and the public in general.

Come on let us talk about depression...
Let us march towards happiness



Eklavya Foundation for Mental Health, Pune
Shaniwar Peth

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