

Behind the facade - recognizing and treating depression

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Introduction

About one in five people will develop depression in the course of their lives. In Switzerland, it is the most common mental illness. Feelings of dejection or sadness are part of being human. But when does it become a serious illness? A clear distinction is important in order to recognize relevant symptoms of depression early enough and to shorten the suffering with professional help. This is because those affected often only decide to undergo psychotherapy when they have already accumulated a considerable amount of suffering. On the other hand, those who recognize and treat depression at an early stage can change negative behavior patterns more easily.

When the mood turns into depression

People who are exposed to stressful events usually develop an upset. This can be after a breakup, after a prolonged illness, or when there are stresses at work. This type of upset is common and usually short-lived. Usually only individual areas of life are negatively affected, while confidence and joy continue to be experienced in others. The ability to contact other people and general performance are also usually less affected. However, if a stressful condition cannot be compensated for over a longer period of time, depressive symptoms gradually develop. This shows a completely different picture than the moodiness. In the case of depression, it is roughly as if the person affected were walking through a magnificent garden. With beautiful birds of paradise and fantastic plants. But the affected person can only perceive the weeds in the garden. They do not do this intentionally, but it happens because their entire spectrum of perception, their self-confidence and self-worth are severely impaired. Understandably, life can thus only be managed with great effort. Depressed people feel trapped in a destructive vicious circle the longer their suffering lasts.

Diagnosis of depression

For a professional diagnosis of depression, various symptoms must be present in combination for at least two weeks. The most common symptoms include dejection, listlessness, fatigue, brooding, loss of appetite, sleep disturbances, and lack or loss of sexual interest. Feelings of helplessness, irritability, guilt, anxiety, hopelessness, worthlessness, and even suicidal thoughts may occur. Based on the degree of severity, a distinction is made between mild, moderate and severe depression. Since people are holistic beings, depression also affects the body. In their behavior, depressed people tend to withdraw. As a result, contact with their social network is often severely impaired. In their thinking, there is a strong slowdown and they have trouble making decisions. Often they experience a great fear of doing something wrong, which makes them strongly inhibited in everyday life.

Help with psychotherapy

Psychotherapy is initially about recognizing, accepting and understanding a depressive illness. Helpful behaviors and positive resources are reactivated in the course of treatment. In this way, the person affected gradually creates a healthy relationship with himself and with his environment. The goal is, among other things, to pay attention to the beautiful things in life again. It is important to understand that therapy for moderate and severe depression is a lengthy process. In addition, drug therapy may become necessary. Continuing psychotherapy after depression reduces the risk of relapse.

About the author



Peter Luginbühl is a federally recognized psychotherapist with a practice in Zurich. In his many years of work, he has repeatedly experienced in an impressive way that there is usually a reason hidden behind a depression or a crisis. True to the understanding that "the soul does nothing in vain", the therapist always sees an opportunity in the crisis to integrate something new into the personality. The inclusion of the unconscious is suitable for this, e.g. on the basis of the dream work of analytical psychology according to C.G. Jung.