# The Connection Between Depression and Suspicion

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## Are My Depression and Suspicion Connected?

When most people think of depression, they think of the stereotypes. They imagine a tearful woman unable to get out of bed or an adolescent being teased by his peers. They picture a man stressed by his work, family and financial worries. They think of low mood, low energy, hopelessness and poor self-esteem, but these symptoms are not all that depression has to offer.

Many people with depression experience a troubling symptom in the form of being suspicious of others. Being suspicious can be defined here as general mistrust of the situations and people in your life. Suspicion quickly branches into other feelings including jealousy, paranoia and self-consciousness. These branches all share a similar root – mistrust and uncertainty – and range in intensity from mild to severe and life-altering.

### Trust and Mistrust

If suspicion, especially in relationships, has been an issue for as long as you can remember, it is important to reflect on your history. Did you feel suspicious about your last partner? What about the one before that? Did you feel strong jealousy regarding your sixth grade boyfriend or girlfriend? By tracing your history, you gain a better understanding of what triggered the symptoms in the first place. With a better conceptualization, you can work towards improving the situation.

For many that exhibit suspicion throughout their life, their very first relationships are the source. Do not count your kindergarten crush as your first relationship. For everyone, the first relationship happens immediately after birth and is between you and your parents. During the first year of your life, you established basic ideas of trust versus mistrust based on your surroundings and experiences. Once you settle on mistrust, it can be difficult to alter. Trust is more vulnerable and can be distorted through negative experiences.

For example, if your mother kept you fed, clothed, warm, dry and typically met your needs, you gained a sense of trust about her. Her holding you, soothing you and becoming attached to you builds trust. Later, this trust becomes generalized and spreads throughout the rest of the contacts you have. On the other hand, if during the first year of your life, your needs were not met and you experienced being cold, hungry or uncomfortable, notions of mistrust take root.

*Next page: jealousy, suspicion and problems with intimacy.*

### Trust and Mistrust

When you have a broad feeling of mistrust, you are suspicious of people and their motivations. This is the perfect environment for depression to build. Your thoughts will be fueled by speculation, and they will be more negative overall. An odd thing happens when you begin looking for relationships, though. People with a history of mistrust

tend to seek out people that are untrustworthy. This sets the relationship up to fail before it begins. This paradox is common because people find comfort in what is known and familiar.

**Jealously, Suspicion and Problems with Intimacy**

As illustrated, mistrust can result in depression. The opposite also is true as depression can result in mistrust and suspicion. With depression, low self-esteem is a common problem. With low self-esteem, people begin seeking out methods to feel better about themselves, including relationships. A new friend or romantic partner can serve to point out your positives, uncover your strengths and give you a sense of purpose. This is clearly a great source of desired feelings.

Problems arise when you become too dependent on these relationships. You begin to believe that the relationship is responsible for your new, positive feelings and without it, you will return to feelings of insecurity and worthlessness. Therefore, you begin to seek out more contact with the other person, which can make them pull away due to discomfort or not living up to your expectations of them. You may believe that they are avoiding you, and you begin to create explanations that are not based on fact.

This is how the problem forms and develops. Fear, discomfort, low self-esteem and dependency lead to suspicion. Want to end suspicion in current and future relationships? Here's how:

- **Acknowledge your tendencies.** Look at your relationship history for both friendships and romantic relations. What types of people have you been attracted to? Have people lied to you or cheated on you in the past? Have you accepted these behaviors? Do you come on too strong in relationships? Have relationships ended because your suspicions were unfounded? Answering these questions gives you a solid base of understanding for your patterns and trends.

- **Communicate fears.** Once your tendencies have been tracked and accepted, allow others to know where you are coming from and why this is a problem for you. Describe the expectations you have, and consequences of their behaviors. As long as you communicate well and remain fair and kind, you are providing them with the information needed to have a successful relationship with you.
- **Use facts.** When suspicions grow, your perceptions become less objective. Less objectivity leads to emotional reasoning, which means that you believe something is true based on feelings rather than facts, like, "I feel like he is cheating so it must be true." Without facts, you have no evidence. Without evidence, you have no case. It will be too easy for the other person to disregard your suspicions if you base the situation on subjective feelings. Ask yourself what proof you have. If there are no facts, you must talk yourself out of suspicion.

- **Seek outside opinions.** Impartial friends are a great resource for you when jealously and suspicions grow, because you are unable to see the complete picture. Encourage them to use facts and objectivity rather than feelings and rumor. Hopefully, they know and understand your trends so that they can remind you of previous situations where your suspicions where correct or incorrect.

*Next page: jealousy, suspicion and problems with intimacy continued.*

**Jealously, Suspicion and Problems with Intimacy**

- **Manage anxiety.** Anxiety increases when suspicions grow. If you believe your suspicion is groundless, work on the anxiety. Remind yourself that things are okay with the relationship. Focus on the positive aspects of the relationship and positive aspects of yourself to improve esteem. These are great measures to progress your thoughts. To improve your anxiety behaviorally, find new ways to have fun with your partner. When apart, complete relaxation techniques to reduce stress and tension.
- **End what cannot survive.** If your current relationships are based on lies, deception and mistrust, end them and find healthy relationships. Changing the structure of a flawed relationship is challenging. Trust is difficult to repair if infidelities have already occurred. Remember that no relationships are better than

unhealthy relationships. Do not let depression or desperation cloud your judgment.

**Paranoia**

Paranoia is an extension of suspicion. During periods of paranoia, you have strong feelings of jealously, suspicion, and in extreme cases, delusions of persecution – the idea that people or organizations are conspiring against you. Paranoia leads people to feel very anxious and depressed.

Depression can be the cause of paranoia as well as the result. When depressive symptoms worsen over time without effective treatment, psychotic symptoms may occur. During a psychotic episode, you lose touch with reality. Your senses and perceptions become less accurate and exaggerated to be more negative. Many people experience paranoia as part of delusional thinking.

In the moment, it will be quite difficult to differentiate between psychotic paranoia and accurate suspicion. Asking yourself questions about proof, objective evidence and likelihood of your paranoia being possible will help you determine if your thoughts are rational. Likewise, confiding in a trusted source and accepting their opinion of the situation will be helpful. If you find that your paranoia is unfounded, take action by consulting with your psychiatrist or mental health professional as people are known to act recklessly during periods of paranoia.

In addition to depression, paranoia could stem from another disorder like schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder or paranoid personality disorder. Some level of paranoia is expected with these illnesses. Drug use is another factor that can trigger or amplify feelings of paranoia. Avoid recreational drug use or self-medication if there is a history of paranoia for you or members of your family. Lastly, monitor your sleeping patterns. Poor sleep can trigger extreme suspicion. Improve sleep to target the root of the symptom.

**Conclusion**

Positive, productive and desirable relationships cannot survive in a suspicious environment. By improving your understanding of the ways depression and suspicion are linked, as well as the causes, variations and treatments for suspicion, you are more likely to have better relationships. Getting along with more people is something you can really relate to.