How Can I Cope with Recurrent Depression?

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Coping With Recurrent Depression

Some people experience a single depressive episode and fully recover. Unfortunately, many experience recurrent depression.

Depression is a significantly debilitating mental health disorder, affecting more than 16.1 million American adults. For most people, depression is a one-time occurrence, but a few of us end up facing several relapses of depressive symptoms, a condition known as **major recurrent depression**.

Recurrent depression is a severe and challenging type of depression to treat.

A person suffering from recurrent depression may experience the following symptoms:

- Unrealistic anxiety.
- Despair and hopelessness.
- Chronic fatigue.
- Inability to make decisions.
- Lack of interest in life.
- Susceptibility to suicidal thoughts.

People who suffer from recurrent depression tend to suffer from symptoms that resolve on their own. These people usually feel normal most days and behave ordinarily for days, weeks or months before showing signs of another depressive episode.

But the depression always returns. Untreated major recurrent depression can result in worsening symptoms and an increased risk of suicide, which can increase with each episode.

What Triggers Recurring Depression?

Why does depression keep rearing its ugly head over and over for some of us, and what can we do to manage triggers and prevent reoccurrences?

Anyone who suffers from depression is susceptible to recurrence. Traumatic life experiences can trigger a recurrent episode of depression.

Painful situations that may cause depressive symptoms to return can include anything from the death of a loved one to a job loss or physical illness. Some people are even predisposed to recurring depression.

Diagnosing Recurrent Depression

A diagnosis of recurrent depression is made by getting a complete history of trauma, medical health and family history of mental illness. This usually involves the presence of two or more major depressive episodes, which are at least two consecutive months apart.

Major depressive episodes are characterized by persistent depressed mood and/or loss of interest in most life activities, causing significant impairment in your daily life.

Managing Triggers and Coping

There many ways you can cope and manage your depression triggers.

Here are some things they may help:

- **Positive self-talk**. Sometimes, the simple act of telling yourself your feelings are temporary can make a big difference in keeping depressive symptoms at bay. When I feel like depression is winning, I remind myself this will pass and I cannot allow the depressive feelings to take over.
- **Nurture your soul**. It is important to support your mental health. Listening to my favorite music, taking a warm bath, meditating or going for a walk are all ways I cope when things that seem overwhelming.
- **Seek out support**. You may want to be alone when your emotions start to take over, but isolating yourself will trigger depression symptoms. Let your loved ones know you are struggling or consider joining a support group to help you reach out to others who understand what it is like living with depression.

If you think you may be suffering from a depression relapse, reach out to your doctor or therapist. Recurrent depression is common and nothing for you to be ashamed of.

Recurrent Depression Treatment

There are three types of treatments available for treating recurrent depression, including:

1. Psychotherapy

Also called talk therapy, psychotherapy involves working with a therapist to work through situations bringing about your depression. There are several different approaches to psychotherapy, including cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), interpersonal therapy and other kinds of talk therapy.

CBT involves learning to be aware of feelings and triggers and training your brain to handle your responses better. Interpersonal therapy focuses on your relationships and how they affect your life and what you can to minimize or modify the effect some people and circumstances have on your life.

2. Antidepressant Medications

Some studies have reported long-term maintenance therapy may reduce the risk of reoccurrence. It is recommended for patients who suffer from chronic depression to continue treatment for at least six months after symptoms have resolved to reduce the chances of recurrence.

3. Electroconvulsive Therapy

Also called shock therapy, electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) is the last result in treating recurrent depression. ECT involves delivering electrical stimulation to the brain, causing a seizure.

For reasons researchers have yet to understand, the seizure relieve depressive symptoms without causing any structural brain damage.

Most patients who suffer from recurrent depression are treated with a combination approach of antidepressant medication and talk therapy, which continues until you research a mild state of depression. This is the point where

you can go back to performing daily activities and having a regular productive life.

Once you have reached this point in your treatment, your doctor or therapist will decide whether you will need additional talk therapy or doses of antidepressants to prevent a recurrence.

The Outlook

Regardless of how your depression is treated, recurrent depression requires a long-term commitment to managing triggers and seeking medical and therapist help if symptoms start returns. It is important you don’t stop taking your depression medications without your doctor’s approval.

The outlook when you seek out treatment for recurrent depression is good. Make sure you work with a therapist if your depression returns so you can regain control of your life.