7 Common Things That Can Trigger Depression

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What Triggers Depression?

Anyone who has suffered from major depression knows relapses are possible. And these relapses, although usually not as severe as major depression (also called clinical depression), can still be debilitating, leave you feeling hopeless and exhausted, and complicate your quality of life.

The one good thing about occurrences is that they can help you to recognize and avoid your depression triggers so that you can manage those in the future.

Here is what you need to know about the most common triggers, and how to avoid depression triggers and manage them.

Common Depression Triggers

Triggers set off depression because they overwhelm your ability to cope effectively.

The most common events that trigger a depressive episode include:

- **Quitting treatment.** Sometimes when depressed people feel better, they stop taking medication and going to therapy. As a result, they don't recover fully, and symptoms slowly return.
- **Death of a loved one.** According to the American Cancer Society, 1 in 5 people will become clinically depressed after the death of a loved one. And people who have suffered from major depression previously are more likely to have a relapse if they struggle to manage their grief.
- **Addictions.** Any addictive behavior - excessive alcohol consumption, gambling or binge eating – can bring about depression relapses. Even binge watching (watching too much television over a continuous and long period) can trigger depression, according to one report from the American Public Health Association.
- **Divorce.** One study reported in the journal, *Clinical Psychological Science* finds that divorce increases the risk for depression relapse. Researchers found up to 60 percent of divorced people who were previously depressed had a relapse, this compared to the ten percent who had not been depressed before.
- **Trauma.** Scary events, such as natural disasters, terrorist attacks, and mass shootings can bring about depression relapses, and so can anniversaries of these events. Research from the *British Journal of Psychiatry* finds that people who have direct involvement with these tragedies are at the highest risk for depression relapses.
- **Hormones.** Hormone levels can be triggers to depression, which explains why women are a higher risk for depression. Research from *Journal of Psychiatry & Neuroscience* finds that young women are twice as likely to become depressed compared to young men, and they are at the highest risk for major depression starting at puberty. A more significant prevalence – over twice as much – for women is also reflected in the number of prescriptions written for antidepressants.
- **Job loss and money worries.** Losing a job can cause financial stress and affect your confidence.

Unemployment and financial concern can also strain relationships and bring about stress the pressure that can cause your depression to come back. Worrying about paying bills brings about stress, sabotages your mood and self-esteem and leads to depression relapses. People who feel alone when it comes to their financial situations are at the highest risk.

What Are the Symptoms of a Depression Relapse?

You may recognize some of the same warning signs of depression you had from previous depressive episodes. It is also possible you may experience symptoms that you didn't previously have.

Symptoms of a depression relapse may include:

- Depressed mood, including feelings of sadness, anger, hopelessness, and numbness
- Loss of interest in activities you previously enjoyed
- Social withdrawal
- Fatigue that makes it harder to do simple, everyday tasks
- Restlessness and agitation
- Changes in sleeping patterns
- Loss of appetite or increased appetite
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Concentration and memory problems
- Suicidal thoughts or suicide attempts

Managing Depression Triggers to Avoid Relapses

Prevention strategies are the best ways to control your triggers and prevent a relapse:

Keep up with Your Treatments

During the first six months after your treatment begins, it is important to take all medication your doctor has prescribed to treat your depression precisely as he or she has told you to take them. It is also important to attend all therapy sessions, as your therapist is in the best position to determine how much therapy you need and for long.

Even if you start to feel better, you should not discontinue medication or other treatment without approval from your doctor or mental health professional.

Be Mindful

Research shows practicing mindfulness at least three times week can cut your risk for a depression relapse by up to 50 percent, according to one report in *Behaviour Research and Therapy*.

Examples of mindfulness-based therapies include mindfulness meditation, acceptance and commitment therapy, and mindfulness-integrated cognitive behavioral therapy.

Educate Loved Ones

No one knows what depression is like better than you, and you also know your unique responses and behaviors when you are depressed. Therefore, you are in the best position to educate family and friends about the warning signs of relapse so that you may catch it early.

Be Prepared

Just because your depression has not returned, it does not mean it will not. Talk to your doctor about what you can do when you notice depressive symptoms returning to avoid things from getting worse.

My Depression Is Coming Back, What Should I Do?

If you suspect you are experiencing another depressive episode, reach out to your doctor or therapist. Relapses are common, and as soon as you start taking action, you can begin working towards feeling better and enjoying life again.