

# Depression and Anxiety

## Depression

One source of depression for family members can be the traumatic event itself. All traumas involve events where people suddenly find themselves in danger. When this happens in a situation or place where people are used to feeling safe, just knowing the event happened could cause a person to lose faith in the safety and predictability of life. For example, if a woman gets mugged in the parking lot of a neighborhood shopping center, her family may find they feel depressed by the idea that they are not really as safe as they thought they were, even in their own neighborhood.

It can also be very depressing when a traumatic event threatens a person's ideals about the world. Before that event, the person may have been able to believe that people are basically good and kind.

Depression is also common among family members when the traumatized person acts in a way that causes feelings of pain or loss. There may be changes in family life when a member has PTSD or other symptoms after trauma. The traumatized person may feel too anxious to go out on family outings as he or she did in the past. The traumatized person may not be able to work because of PTSD symptoms. As a result, the family income may decrease and the family may be unable to buy things and do things the way they did before the traumatic event. A husband may feel unloved or abandoned when - because of her depression - his traumatized wife withdraws emotionally and avoids being intimate or sexual. Children whose father can't be in crowds because of combat trauma may feel hurt that their father won't come to see them play sports. When PTSD lasts for a long time, family members can begin to lose hope that their loved one or their family will ever get "back to normal."

## Anxiety

Anxiety is best described as a state of apprehension and worry that something unpleasant is about to happen. It is often accompanied by a range of physical symptoms which are, in themselves, very frightening. Sometimes people experiencing these symptoms believe that they are going to die from a heart attack or go crazy.

Anxiety can be specific to certain situations (such as social events, crowded places, or public transport), or it can be a general state of worry. It is common to feel anxious when facing a dangerous or difficult situation. It is however unusual to feel anxious all the time or to feel that anxiety has taken over one's life. Severe anxiety occurs when the body repeatedly overreacts and responds with agitation to something that is not in itself dangerous. Anxiety can become very disabling, as people tend to avoid a wide range of situations that make them anxious. The symptoms are very unpleasant and may cause a great deal of distress.

## **Common Symptoms of Anxiety**

- Apprehension, fearfulness, or terror
- Shortness of breath and tightness in the chest
- Palpitations and increased heart rate
- Sweating
- Shaking, trembling, or dizziness
- Fear of losing control or going crazy
- Excessive worry
- Feeling restless and on edge
- Feelings of unreality
- Feelings of choking
- Fear of dying and losing control
- Muscle tension
- Physical disorders (e.g., skin complaints, stomach upsets, aches and pains)