

Mood Disorders

Mood disorders are characterized by symptoms that are exclusively of elevated mood episodes, depressed mood episodes, or the going back-and-forth between elevated and depressed. The length of time and severity of the symptoms will indicate what kind of disorder a person has.

Dysthymic Disorder

Dysthymic Disorder is characterized by chronic depression, but with less severity than a major depression. The essential symptom for dysthymic disorder is an almost daily depressed mood for at least two years, but without the necessary criteria for a major depression. Low energy, sleep or appetite disturbances and low self-esteem are usually part of the clinical picture as well.

Symptoms of a major depressive episode include:

- Depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day
- Loss of pleasure or interest in activities
- Weight loss or gain or decrease or increase in appetite
- Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt
- Inability to think or concentrate or indecisiveness
- Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide ideation

Symptoms of a manic episode include:

- Inflated self-esteem or grandiosity
- Decreased need for sleep
- More talkative than usual
- Flight of ideas or racing thoughts
- Distractibility
- Increased goal-directed activity
- Excessive involvement in pleasurable activities that can have negative consequences

Medications

People seeking treatment for psychological disorders may be prescribed various medications to help alleviate the symptoms of their disorder. It is important to know that taking these medications won't instantly make someone better or alleviate all symptoms. Most of these medications take anywhere from 4-6 weeks to build up in the body for an effect to take place.

You may encounter students who are not "med-complaint" because there is a stigma attached to mental illness and with taking medications. Once the person feels better, they may incorrectly choose not to take the medication anymore because they feel that they don't need it. Unfortunately, they soon find out that their symptoms quickly return.

Resources

- National Mental Health Association: www.nmha.org
- Anxiety Disorders Association of America: www.adaa.org
- Anxiety/Panic Attack Resource Site: www.anxietypanic.com
- Free Anxiety Self-help Resource: www.anxieties.com
- Freedom From Fear: www.freedomfromfear.com
- National Anxiety Foundation: <http://lexington-on-line.com/naf.html>
- National Institute of Mental Health: www.nimh.nih.gov
- Obsessive-Compulsive Foundation: www.ocfoundation.org