

Q & A Mindline



Dr Roshan Jain
Senior Consultant Psychiatrist &
De-addiction Specialist
Apollo Hospitals, Bangalore

Q What is the difference between depressed mood and Depression? Please clarify one from the other and when should one consider seeking help and taking medicines?

Depressed mood is an emotion or feeling that we all experience. Transient feelings of sadness, emptiness or loneliness when one goes through a stressful life experience is part of being human. But one continues to function normally during this time and is able to overcome it spontaneously.

Where as depression is a medical condition that goes beyond life's ordinary ups and downs. Herein, one struggles to get out of the depressed phase and feelings of sadness linger continuously. Alongside, one suffers a loss of interest in a previously enjoyable activity, tiredness and loss of energy with little or no activity, sleep disturbance with early waking, loss of appetite and poor concentration. Additionally, there can be hopelessness and worthlessness along with negative life views or suicide ideation. Importantly, depression begins to interfere with work, socialising or recreation. The above feature would be typically present for most days of the week and for two continuous weeks to be classified as clinical depression.

Talking about and venting your emotions can unburden you of those heavy pent-up feelings, and can also be a catalyst for introspection, insight and transformation. Emotions must flow more through words and less with tears. In simple words, speak up (about your problems), share your feelings and consider solutions, especially with your near and dear ones. In doing so, you might avert a clinical depression.

But, if the above features have been present for two weeks, then it's advisable to seek professional consultation, so that early diagnosis and intervention can be planned. While milder clinical depression responds well to formal psychotherapy (talk therapy) or informal counselling, for more severe /significant depression, a combination of talk therapy and medicine would be ideal. Research has established that medication and psychological therapies together is more effective than a singular approach.

Q I was diagnosed with anxiety and depression secondary to work stress but was unable to take time off from work despite informing my manager about it.? There was a brief note from the psychiatrist, but it was not accepted. My line manager did not believe that I was unwell and pressured me to stay at work as there were projects to complete. I suffered for weeks until I decided to resign from my post. Please advise how I should go about this in future?

Employers have a legal and moral responsibility to take care of their employees' health and wellness. This means they are required to be empathic and offer support and solutions to their invaluable workforce when health problems ensue. Support may include changes to the nature of work, workload, timings and shifts and giving time-off to rest, relax and rejuvenate. Besides, there must be a system of seeking professional advice and



guidance to enable employee's journey to recovery.

When it comes to depression and other mental health problems, there is still undeniable ignorance and stigma, which precipitates barriers to seeking help (amongst the sufferers) and bullying by the ill-informed employers. Work-related stress has become an inescapable and modern-day reality, which if left unattended will lead to burnout, and break down to a wide array of physical (like high blood pressure, diabetes, heart attack and stroke among other ailments) and psychological problems (including anxiety, depression and addictive problems).

I think you should have made a formal complaint to senior management and had them interact with your psychiatrist, to understand your health matters and need for time off work. Contrary to misconception, stress and mental health problems do not necessarily impair capacity to work and sustain employment.

At this stage you can send a legal notice (via lawyer) to the employer, informing him/her about your grievance. If they do not respond, then you can file a complaint with the Labour Court, which has appropriate jurisdiction.