

Mood Disorders Afflict Adults and Children Alike

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About the Author:

Dr. Arthur has served on the Center's founding team since early 2006. She has been integral in designing its world-class patient and family-centered evidence-based psychotherapy programs for both inpatient and outpatient services. As Chief of Psychology, Dr. Arthur oversees clinical treatment professionals administering Cognitive and Dialectical Behavior Therapy, as well as other treatment modalities.

Summary:

Mood disorders affect children, adolescents and adults. This article describes the symptoms of mood disorders, the differences between them in adults and children, and the universally prescribed treatments for both.

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Roughly one in 10 Americans (approximately 30 to 40 million) suffer from mood disorders. Our "mood" can be described as our sustained internal state of emotion, or as the dictionary defines it, our "prevailing emotional tone." Basically, our mood is our state of being.

We all experience ups and downs and highs and lows in our moods and in our natural reactions to everyday life events. But under normal circumstances our moods remain fairly constant, that is, they don't stray very far towards the extreme in either direction. Those who *do* experience extreme highs and/or lows on a prolonged or frequent basis may very well be suffering from a mood disorder.

Mood disorders don't discriminate according to age. Though they may carry varying characteristics and symptoms according to the age group, they affect children as well as adolescents and adults.

Types of Mood Disorders

There are numerous subcategories of illnesses that fall under the major category of "mood disorders," but generally, the most well-known and widely acknowledged are:

- **Major depressive disorder.** Among the varying levels of depression, this is the most acute and at times paralyzing form. Depression is characterized by prolonged periods of sadness, hopelessness and/or deep emotional "downs."
- **Bipolar disorder.** This is where an individual will experience alternating periods of extreme euphoria or intense "highs," and deep depression.

- **Dysthymia.** This is characterized by a consistent “low” or “down” mood, usually for at least one year; an extended period of depression, although not as severe as major depression.

Mood disorders may frequently develop during childhood and will continue, becoming more pronounced into adulthood if not properly treated. Depression is common among the mood disorders that children will typically suffer with, but doctors are now becoming aware that children as young as six- or seven-years-old can exhibit manic tendencies or have some level of bipolar disorder.

It is more difficult to diagnose bipolar disorder within children because their symptoms are less apparent than they are in adults. But irritability, unusual behavior, prolonged sadness and rapid mood swings (more rapid than in adults) are among the indicators in children. Therefore, consultation with a mental health professional is imperative for proper diagnosis.

Treatment

Basically, treatment for mood disorders is somewhat similar for adults and children. The two standard approaches are medication and psychotherapy. Research indicates that the combination of the two gives the best treatment outcomes for many mood disorders. There may be quite a few variables depending on the individual case, but essentially the same medications are used for adults and children with bipolar disorder. Of course dosages are smaller for children, and a “trial and error” process may take place for both adults and children to find the medication—or combination of medications—that works.

Psychotherapy is an essential component of treatment, and it can be delivered in many forms. One of the differences between adults and children in this area is that in many instances children will start out with therapy before medications are administered, whereas adults will usually start on medication right away.

There are also treatment centers around the country whose specific mission it is to administer to those suffering from a wide scope of mental health issues. Lindner Center of HOPE near Cincinnati, Ohio is one of the finest facilities in the country for diagnosing and treating mood disorders. Headed by world-renowned experts in the field of psychiatry, [Dr. Paul E. Keck, Jr.](#) (CEO), and [Dr. Susan L. McElroy](#), this outpatient and residential facility offers some of the finest clinicians, resources and equipment in the world. Lindner Center of HOPE’s research endeavors are unsurpassed, as is the quality of care that they provide.

For those who feel the need to reach out for help, the caring folks at Lindner Center of HOPE are waiting to accommodate. They can be reached at 888-536-HOPE (4673).