

Top 3 Signs That a Person You Know is Suffering from Depression and Needs to See a Professional

By Mihaela Bernard, MA, LCPC



Before I jump into listing the signs, I want to emphasize that often people, who struggle with severe depression, may not find the willpower or desire to seek professional help on their own, and it is extremely important for people in their life to notice their pain and do something about it before it's too late. We have all had a friend or family member experience depression for one reason or another and it can be confusing, scary and inhibiting to watch them suffer.

[Elsewhere](#), I spoke about how psychoanalysis understands depression and listed the common symptoms associated with the diagnosis. Here, I want to give you the clinical presentation of how a person, struggling with depression, will appear to others around them and how can you, the observer, recognize the signs of depression when you see them and possibly do something about it.

Here are the top three signs that the occasional blues have turned into a clinical depression:

1. Extreme social withdrawal and isolation – if the person used to be socially engaged, went to work or school and all of a sudden, s/he is struggling to fulfill basic responsibilities, this is a sign that they are lacking motivation, have no interest in social activities, spend most of their time alone, in front of the TV or sleeping, all of which point to depression.

2. Complete or partial neglect for personal hygiene and change in physical appearance – this is a very obvious sign that the person has stopped caring about how they look, smell or appear to others that is easily noticeable by family members and friends. When it becomes a regular occurrence and

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the person no longer cares to clean their home or their body, it is clear that depression has set in deeply and an intervention may even save that person's life. At that point, they may be thinking about or planning suicide, feeling hopeless, helpless and utterly desperate. Changes in their physical appearance such as gaining or losing a lot of weight may also be observed.

3. Changes in personality – if you find yourself thinking that the person you once knew is no longer there and they seem to have neglected their appearance or completely altered their way of relating to other people, this is a sign that something painful is going on internally, resulting in depression. In order to cope with the pain, the person may be drinking excessively or abusing other substances to the point of blacking out, forgetting or letting it impact their personal, social and occupational functioning. Frequent arguments, bursts of anger or sadness, impulsive and risky behavior may accompany this personality change.

If you or someone you know is experiencing any of these changes in mood and behavior, this may be an indication that they are depressed and need to see a professional. Then the next question comes:

How do you choose what kind of therapist you need to see?

Some people still think that psychoanalysts or psychoanalytic therapists are simply quacks and cannot really address the real issues that people struggling with depression or other severe mental illness are facing. However, in order to call yourself a psychoanalyst or a psychoanalytic therapist, you have not only completed the necessary training requirements that all other therapists in the field have but you have also completed additional course and clinical work that often lasts for years. In fact, many psychoanalysts are also psychiatrists, PhDs or Master's level social workers and counselors, who all know how to address issues like depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, psychosis, substance abuse, etc.

Why am I bothering telling you all this? Because this is a blog about practical psychoanalysis and I want to make sure that I speak about psychoanalysis in an accessible way for the general public; in a way that you can understand what's the difference between going to a psychoanalytic psychotherapist and a cognitive-behavioral therapist for example.

Cognitive-behavioral therapy versus psychoanalysis

Now, both of these hypothetical therapists will know the warning signs of clinical depression, i.e. the signs pointing at the fact that the occasional blues have graduated into a clinical depression. People, who are struggling will benefit from seeing either mental health professional as they are both trained in recognizing and treating these mental disorders.

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What psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapists offer that is different from other therapies, is a deeper understanding of the reasons behind the depression and the healing that comes with that. For some folks, a short-term, goal-oriented, goal-focused approach such as in cognitive-behavioral therapy is much more needed and beneficial. But for others, getting rid of the depression is not as simple as “take that medicine” and “try this technique.” It is for those people that psychoanalysis is meant for – the people, who want to find out WHY; who want to understand, who want to process their unconscious, unnamed feelings, thoughts and experiences and who want to be the ones in control of their actions, not the other way around.

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Do you have questions? Found this article interesting? I would love to [hear from you](#).

Do you know someone, who may be struggling with depression? Leave me a comment and tell me what’s happening with that person and I will be happy to help you decide whether or not they may need to seek professional help.

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