

WHEN IS IT MORE THAN JUST A BLUE DAY?

We all have ups and downs in our mood, and who hasn't had the Sunday-evening blues, or first-day-back-at-work downer after being on leave? When we receive bad news or are criticised it's also quite normal to feel a little flat or subdued. These mood states tend to change after a while though, as time passes and circumstances change. Even if they last for a full day, maybe a day or two if something has really upset you, the down mood still changes back to neutral or is even uplifted.

WHEN IS IT MORE THAN JUST A BLUE DAY OR TWO OR THREE?

The two main symptoms to be alert for when we are talking depression are changes in mood and sleep.



Watch your mood

When your mood is low, negative, pessimistic, and you find yourself becoming tearful over small things most of the time, and this lasts two to four weeks, it's more than feeling stressed. Or perhaps you are irritable combined with low mood, or feel numb and detached and you just don't care about anything. These mood states are something to take note of, especially if they start to affect how you do your work and how you deal with others.



Your sleep can tell you if it's time to worry

Sleep is the other main symptom of depression. Again, depression is not a few nights of broken or disturbed sleep, or struggling to shut your mind down before being able to fall asleep. The same is true if you are waking early, with a racing mind or consumed by thoughts of the past. In some cases you may be feeling flat and just want to sleep, with naps during the day and more than 9 hours at night.

All of these can happen for a few nights or days at a time, but if/when sleeping too much or too little becomes a pattern and you have mood symptoms for four weeks or more, this could be the early signs of depression.



Burnout

Depression can also be confused with burnout. They share symptoms of disturbed sleep, mood, and others like significant changes in appetite, concentration, short-term memory and motivation.

One of the key differences between burnout and depression is that burnout focuses just on work and your mood tends to lift by the end of the week when it's weekend, and drop significantly by Sunday afternoon and evening. Depression is there every day, no matter if it's a weekday or weekend.

Dr Colinda Linde

M.A.Clin.Psych; D.Litt et Phil
Clinical Psychologist

In burnout, your negative thoughts are mostly about the type of work you do, place of work, the people there. In depression, as we explain in this article series, negative thoughts filter into your whole life and affect functioning in areas beyond work such as your personal relationships and social life.

So while we all have mood changes through the day and across a week or month, feeling lower on some days than others, sometimes too many blue days can be the start of a blue phase. Only a doctor or clinical psychologist can diagnose depression, but if you feel that you may be suffering from burnout or symptoms of depression, contact the Healthy Company support line for further professional assistance or advice.

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