

A NEW DAY PEDIATRIC PSYCHOLOGY

Healing the hurt. Educating the mind. Inspiring the soul.

DYSTHYMIA: CONQUERING DEPRESSION WITH STRENGTH

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FEATURED WRITER



Dysthymia, also known as persistent depressive disorder, is a psychological condition that is described as chronic depression. Symptoms of dysthymia can include loss of interest in favorite activities, hopelessness, sadness, low self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy, and lack of productivity. When someone is experiencing these symptoms, they are commonly thought to be a part of the person's personality. However, dysthymia is classified as a mental health condition that should be treated when symptoms arise. The most effective ways to treat the disorder is through psychotherapy, social support, engaging in enjoyable activities, exercise, and sometimes medication.

The causes of dysthymia are: biological changes in the brain, brain chemistry (this refers to neurotransmitters developing changes in the way they function, as well as how they communicate with neurons), inheritance (family history of depression and anxiety are important to ask about), and life events (trauma, transition, loss, social isolation).

A New Day Pediatric Psychology, PLLC falls under the vision of Dr. Ann-Louise T. Lockhart, Pediatric Psychologist and Board Certified in Child and Adolescent Psychology.

A New Day specializes in evidence-based behavioral health treatment, interventions, and psychological evaluations for children, adolescents, and adults with known or suspected behavioral health and/or medical conditions affecting all aspects of development and functioning.



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The complications of dysthymia can involve reduced quality of life, other mood disorders, substance abuse, relationship struggles, chronic pain, and suicidal thoughts. Although dysthymia can be difficult to control, it can be preventable by reducing stress, talking to loved ones, seeking out mental health professionals, seeking treatment when symptoms occur, and behavioral activation (exercise, engaging in enjoyable activities, meaningful social interactions).

In today's society, depressive disorders, including dysthymia, are not taken seriously. When someone has clinical depression, society believes that the person is seeking attention, not grateful for their life, or that it's "all in their head". However, dysthymia does not mean that one is trying to not enjoy the world around them. The disorder simply hinders people from getting past the negative thoughts that can ultimately consume the mind. There is currently a stigma towards depressive disorders, but it should not prevent people from getting the help they need.

For children who have dysthymia, it can be difficult for them to communicate how they are feeling inside. For some kids, they may act out due to dysthymia. This is because children tend to externalize (or push out) their feelings compared to many adults who tend to internalize (or push in) their feelings, keeping it to themselves. When children are struggling with their disorder, this is a time when parents need to have empathy and compassion. Although it can be frustrating to interact with a defiant child, it is important to remain calm and help them learn healthy coping skills. This can be done by reassuring the child that it is okay to be angry about their diagnosis and how they are feeling, but also remind them that it is vital to express themselves to people who can help with regulating emotions in a healthy way. Dysthymia is a tiring and often overwhelming condition, both physically and mentally, but it does not ultimately have the power to take over people's lives and prevent them from living a beautiful journey.

Strategies for Dealing with Depressed Mood

Excerpt from "You Are Not Alone" by Dr. Ann-Louise Lockhart

- 1. Optimism vs. Pessimism.** It's all a matter of perspective. We can't always avoid or prevent the bad things that happen to us. But, we can choose how we respond to unfortunate events.
- 2. Learn to be flexible and adaptable.** These are important skills to model when raising your child. Being able to function even when everything around you tells you to fall apart is a skill that helps our children become successful in the future. They learn from watching us!
- 3. Be happy in the now.** Trying hard to push relentlessly toward a goal can be detrimental to your physical and psychological health. Learn to be content in the middle of the waiting. I'm not happy all the time because moods will fluctuate and change. However, I definitely have learned to be content regardless of the circumstances.
- 4. Physical activity and exercise.** Children should have recess every day at school and engage in some athletic or physical activity daily at home and on the weekends.
- 5. Enjoyable activities.** Anxiety and depression tend to go hand in hand, so engaging in enjoyable activities helps to take the attention away from the self and onto fun activities.

Download Dr. Lockhart's ebook, *You Are Not Alone* at www.anewdaysa.com.

STAY TUNED

This newsletter is issued every first and third week of each month.

The purpose of this newsletter is to educate, inspire, and bring healing and awareness by discussing a variety of behavioral health and medical conditions.


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