

Rose's CORNER

I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS



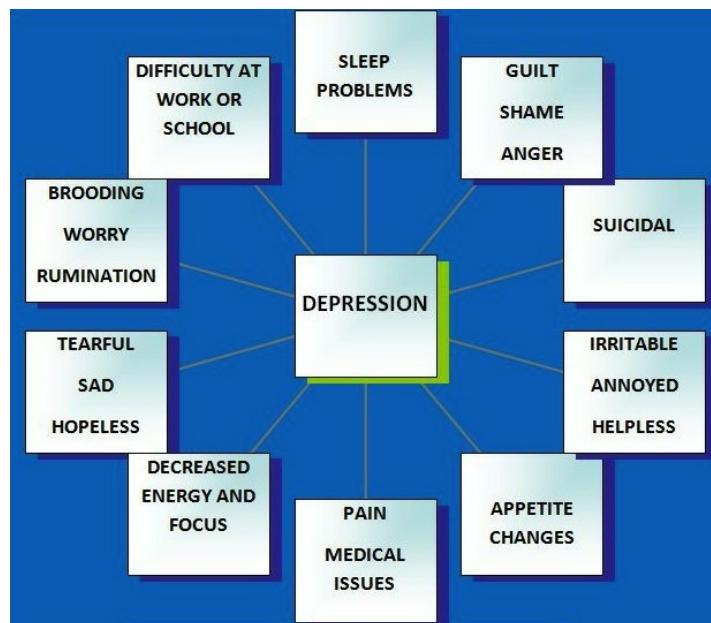
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Creativity & Depression: Is There a Link?



When the Blues Keeps You Down

The song is right, when you have the blues it does seem to be raining all the time. The symptoms of depression are extensive and can include physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects.



We mostly think of stomach upsets and headaches from depression and tension, but other symptoms can be achy jaw or shoulders, racing heart or skipped beats, or even prickling sensation in the arms or legs like something is crawling or biting underneath the skin.

Mentally, the symptoms can range from sluggish thinking to racing thoughts that include fearful thoughts. Emotionally anger to lash out at people and drive them away, loss of interest in life, panic attacks and thoughts of suicide. Spiritually there can be anger towards God or even Satan, guilt and feelings of abandonment.

Resources

Behind the music: Why are musicians more likely to suffer from depression?

Creative artists are 5th in the top 10 professions with high rates of depressive illness. But does depression attract them to music? Or does a career in music make them depressed?

Health.com recently published a Top 10 of professions with the highest rate of depression- one chart most musicians wouldn't want to be on. However, people working in the arts are 5th most likely to suffer from depression, with around 9% of them reporting a major depressive episode in the previous year. It appears carving out a career as a musician isn't just perilous when it comes to earning a living - it can also cause damage to your physical and mental health. Musicians supplementing their income by waiting tables would rate even higher on the chart, as food service staff are second most prone to depression.

Among men - who are most likely to be associated with major depression - the rate is nearly 7% for full-time workers. Those figures are not surprising.

Many prominent artists have suffered depression and died as a result. In 2003, the singer-songwriter Elliott Smith was found dead with what were thought to be self-inflicted stab wounds to the chest after years of depression and addiction.

If you broke an arm or leg you would seek treatment. It is same with depression. It is a medical issue and is treatable so don't suffer in silence and pain, let us help you.

If you are feeling hopeless, please come to the NOMC to talk about it with us. Contact NOMC social worker, Megan McStravick, 504-452-5870 or 504-412-1366 or by email mmcstr@lsuhsc.edu.

The good news is that 60-80% of people with depression can be easily treated with brief psychotherapy and medications. Others may need longer treatment but help is available through the New Orleans Musicians Clinic.

Recommended Links

[National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC.gov\)](#)

[National Institute of Mental Health \(NIH.gov\)](#)

Prevalence of Mood Disorders in Creative People in New Orleans

This question haunted Arnold M. Ludwig, a researcher at the University of Kentucky Medical Center. He embarked on a 10-year study of 1004 men and women who were prominent in a variety of professions, including art, music, science and sports. Ludwig found that between 59 and 77 percent of the artists, writers, and musicians suffered mental illness (particularly mood disorders) compared to just 18 to 29 percent in the less artistic professionals.

Most studies on this subject have consistently shown higher rates of mood disorders in creative people, differing only in the magnitude of the results. Are creative people destined to experience depression or bipolar disorder? Or does having a mental illness make people more creative?

While depression causes feelings of being alone, please know that you are not alone.

1 in 10 Americans suffer from depression with Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama in the top 7 states for depression. With our higher rate of depression we also have higher rates of obesity, heart disease, stroke and sleep disorders. Those 45-64 years of age, women, blacks, Hispanics, and those with less than a high school education, previously married, unemployed, and those without health insurance have more chances of being depressed.

Drugs and alcohol have featured in the lifestyles of so many performers for so long that sometimes it's difficult to tell if depression is the symptom or the cause. Some musicians, as Marvin Gaye did, use them to steady their nerves before performances; others use them to come down from the high of the performance.

Many people who become performers do so to fulfill a craving for acceptance and love from their audience; they need that affirmation to be able to feel good. But having a love affair with thousands of people you don't know is bound to lead to dissatisfaction, heartbreak and disappointment - often as soon as you leave the stage, or go home to an empty house.

It also appears that a high proportion of people with depressive illnesses are drawn to working in the arts, though often their problems go undiagnosed and untreated.

Often, what makes an artist great is the fact that they're born "with a skin too few" - which might be why some worry that getting medical treatment would stifle their creativity or make their output less interesting - but that also makes them less able to handle the pressures of not knowing where their next pay packet will come from, and being expected to always be at the top of their game.

Excerpt from
TheGuardian.com

Good Mental Health



According to the Center of Disease Control and Prevention, it is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. In this positive sense, mental health is the foundation for individual well-being and the effective functioning of a community.

Poor Mental Health



Poor mental health is also associated with rapid social change, stressful work conditions, gender discrimination, social exclusion, unhealthy lifestyle, risks of violence and physical ill-health and human rights violations. We have gone through rapid social change with Katrina and the BP oil spill, and musicians often work under stressful conditions or even finding gigs can be stressful. Late nights, smoky bars, alcohol, and late night fast food eating promotes an unhealthy lifestyle. We read and see the risks and effects of violence too often in our city. The list goes on but we can work to overcome this.

BETTER Coping Skills



Join a drumming circle, participate in a yoga class or get acupuncture treatments!

Improve your outlook. One way is to exercise which can be as simple as taking a short walk. Depression can make it hard to move but vigorous activity releases endorphins that make you feel better. Sometimes it is forcing yourself to put one foot in front of the other and then doing it again. It may seem hard at first, but worth it in the end.



Become a Sustaining Supporter

Donate monthly in any amount to support
the New Orleans Musicians' Clinic

New Orleans Musicians' Assistance Foundation

Hours: Monday - Thursday : 10 am - 4 pm

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