

Depression Is Different than Sadness

From Screening for Mental Health Blog

October is National Depression Awareness Month. One of the more common misconceptions about depression is that depressed people are simply very sad. Consequently, people suffering from depression are often told to “cheer up” or “try to think positively” as if that will make their symptoms disappear. The truth is that depression runs much deeper than a simple attitude change. It is a real medical condition that requires treatment.

- People who are depressed do not just feel unhappy: they may feel hopeless, helpless, and apathetic. They are often unable to imagine a positive future. Sometimes they do not feel anything at all.
- Unlike sadness, which lasts for a few days or even weeks, depression may never fully go away, though symptoms will abate. Once someone has experienced a depressive episode, it is likely that he or she will experience an episode again. But, it is still highly treatable.
- Depression does not need to have a particular trigger. When someone is sad, it is because of something—loss, loneliness, pain. A depressive episode, on the other hand, does not always have environmental causation. Sometimes, a person may feel depressed with no inkling as to why the symptoms have emerged.
- If you notice that someone in your life is perpetually “down” or “blue,” consider that it might not just be sadness but more serious depression. Encourage your loved ones to take an anonymous mental health screening at mentalhealthscreening.org/screening/miiawellness or take one on their behalf. Depression is treatable, but only if you recognize the symptoms.

MIIA Well Aware offers free and anonymous screenings for depression and other common mental health conditions at mentalhealthscreening.org/screening/miiawellness.