

Understanding Mood Disorders



Mood disorders are the most common psychiatric disorders and may cause depression and extreme excitement and irritability. A person with a depressive disorder may be sad, extremely tired, unmotivated, suicidal, have no interest in typical pleasurable activities, feel worthless or guilty, and be unable to sleep or eat.

Some people with depression also experience mania, and the combination of the two is known as bipolar disorder. When a person experiences symptoms of mania, he or she has feelings of extreme irritability, inflated self-esteem, racing thoughts, poor judgment, and the urge to engage in extremely risky behaviors. Some people may experience only single episodes of depression and mania, while others may have episodes that reoccur throughout their lives.

People with mood disorders may have difficulty completing tasks at work, managing a household, participating in leisure activities, and maintaining healthy relationships with family and friends. Occupational therapists can help people with mood disorders to regain their ability to function in their daily lives at work and at home.

What can an occupational therapist do?

- **Evaluate** a person's ability to work and take care of himself or herself.
- **Identify** treatment goals that are meaningful to the person, such as establishing a personal care routine; managing money; communicating effectively with family, caregivers, and co-workers; and setting realistic short-term and long-term goals.
- **Adapt** activities and the environment so that the person can participate in tasks that are meaningful to them.
- **Monitor** a person's response to medication used to treat a mood disorder.
- **Educate** family members and caregivers about mood disorders, and collaborate with them on treatment goals.

What can a person with a mood disorder do?

- **Identify** personal goals at work and at home.
- **Modify** tasks at work and at home so that they are able to be completed successfully.
- **Participate** in group or one-on-one counseling.
- **Identify** activities that are meaningful to him or her.
- **Get involved** in community activities and groups that are meaningful to the person.
- **Seek** out occupational therapy intervention through community-based programs and outpatient clinics.

Need more information?

A mood disorder is a serious problem that should not go untreated. Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants are trained in helping both adults and children with a broad range of physical, developmental, and psychological conditions. Practitioners also help clients in wellness techniques that may prevent injury

and disease. If you would like to consult an occupational therapist, practitioners are available through most hospitals, medical centers, and community clinics. Contact your local health officials for more information.