

Is it Sadness or Depression? 10 Questions to Ask Yourself

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Everyone at one time or another experiences sadness, 'the blues', or feels down. When we're disappointed, mourning or grieving, fighting with someone we love, or a myriad of other reasons, our mood can turn from fairly happy and content to sad or depressed.

These feelings of sadness may last for hours or even days. After a major life change, the sadness may last weeks.

And although mild feelings of depression are normal and to be expected, it's important to recognize when you may need to seek help from a professional.

Here are 10 questions to ask yourself to help determine if your sadness could be depression. If you have any concern about your mental health, always check with a professional.

1. **Do you have unexpected, intense sadness that lasts longer than a few days at a time?** Unless a major life change, such as an illness, divorce, or loss of job has occurred, long-lasting sadness is a sign that you need to see a professional for evaluation.
2. **Are you experiencing thoughts of suicide?** If you are imagining that the world would be a better place without you, or if you think the only way you'll ever be happy is to end your life, you need to seek help immediately. Call 911 or go to your ER.
3. **Are you fatigued or lacking in energy?** People who are depressed often feel drained for days or weeks at a time. They may be unable to get out of bed or go to work.
4. **Do you have feelings of hopelessness?** Believing that your life will never improve or get better, or that you're stuck in a situation you can't control, can be a sign of depression.
5. **Are you using alcohol or drugs to manage your mood?** People who are depressed will often use alcohol or drugs to try and manage their feelings of sadness.
6. **Have your eating patterns changed?** Some people engage in overeating, while others have a hard time consuming food and lose weight.
7. **Have you lost interest in activities you used to enjoy?** Going out with friends, attending sporting events, exercising and sexual activity are all things that often stop when a person experiences depression.
8. **Do you feel worthless or guilty?** Depression can cause people to experience guilty feelings when they have done nothing wrong.
9. **Are you losing your temper or fighting more than you used to?** For some people, their sadness or depression comes out as anger. Teens may get into fights at school; adults may argue or scream at their spouses.
10. **Are you becoming more irritable?** Like anger or hostility, increasing irritability can be a sign of depression.

The above questions are not a way to diagnose depression. Their purpose is to help you determine if you should seek help. Only a medical or mental health professional can determine if the sadness you're experiencing is depression. If you're in doubt, see a professional. Depression is a serious illness, but it can be treated.