



Dr. Ian Shulman
Psychologist, Clinic Director

Ian Shulman began his professional career at the Anxiety Disorders Clinic of the former Clarke Institute of Psychiatry where he learned the basics of CBT. He completed his doctorate at the University of Calgary and has been in practice since 2000.

Shift Cognitive Therapy
466 Speers Road, 3rd Floor
Oakville, Ontario L6K 3W9

Direct referrals to:
Tel. 905.849.1288
Fax. 905.849.1589

www.shiftct.com

References:

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2. Blazer, DG, Kessler, RC, McGonagle, KA, & Swartz, MS. (1994). The prevalence and distribution of major depression in a national community sample: The national comorbidity survey. *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 151, 979-986.
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Understanding Depression

Almost everyone uses the words “I’m depressed” to describe how they are feeling from time to time. However, used in this way what it means is often unclear, referring to anything from feeling down or ‘blue’ to being stressed or run down. It is often the way people describe their feelings when they are not even sure what it is they are feeling (e.g., “I’m just not feeling like my usual self. Maybe I’m depressed?”). Everyday feelings of depressed mood become problematic when the symptoms interfere with normal functioning and last for at least two weeks. Clinical depression can affect both the body and mind, changing how a person thinks and behaves, and how his/her body functions. It can disrupt some of the body’s most basic systems, making the person feel unwell.

Signs and Symptoms of Depression:

- Feeling worthless, helpless or hopeless
- Overwhelming feelings of sadness or grief
- Sleeping more or less than usual
- Increased alcohol and drug use
- Staying home from work or school
- Eating more or less than usual
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Loss of interest in usual activities
- Decreased sex drive
- Thoughts of death or suicide.

Causes of Depression

There is no single cause of depression. Rather, a number of factors make some people more prone to it than others. These include upsetting life events, a genetic or family predisposition, and psychological factors, like a negative or pessimistic view of life. Depression tends to recur. Between 50% and 85% of people who have had one episode of depression will experience others in their lifetime¹.

Effects of Untreated Depression

People who are depressed cannot simply “pull themselves together” and feel better. They often delay seeking treatment because of concerns that having those feelings means they are giving up or are weak. These beliefs are untrue. In fact, more than 17% of American adults will experience depression at least once in their lifetime² and the World Health Organization lists depression as the 4th leading cause of disability worldwide³. Untreated, depression can interfere with relationships and

one’s ability to function at work, and can increase the chances of drug or alcohol addiction. In severe cases it can also result in suicide. Without treatment clinical depression can last for months or years.

Systems Affected by Depression:

- Sleep-wake cycle
- Hormonal system
- Stress response system
- Immune system
- Gastrointestinal system

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for Depression

Mild to moderate depression is highly treatable, often without medication. However, the most effective form of treatment is a combination of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) and medication.

When feeling depressed, people think negatively about themselves (*I’m a failure. No one loves me.*), the world (*There is nothing good out there.*) and the future (*Things will never improve.*). These types of thoughts are distortions that can look and feel true only when a person is depressed. At Shift Cognitive Therapy we use CBT to help people become aware of and challenge distorted thoughts that lead to depression. We also focus on changing behaviours that reinforce depression, making it easier to return to normal living.

CBT is an active, ‘doing’ therapy and not simply a talking therapy. It is a collaborative process where the client and psychologist work *together* to identify strategies that will be effective. CBT has a long history of research-based support showing that it is effective as a treatment and flexible enough to adapt to any person’s particular situation and needs. Treatment is usually short-term, typically lasting between 10 and 20, one-hour sessions and focuses on finding effective ways to cope right now. Teaching clients to minimize the chances of relapse and manage future episodes of depression that might occur are other key goals. Services are covered by extended health benefit plans and are tax deductible.

Contact Shift Cognitive Therapy for more information about the treatment of depression.