

Is it Grief or is it Depression? Signs of depression in Older Adults:

Loss is painful—whether a loss of independence, mobility, health, your long-time career, or someone you love. Grieving over these losses is normal, even if the feelings of sadness last for weeks or months. Losing all hope and joy, however, is not normal. It's depression.

Left alone, depression not only prevents older adults from enjoying life like they could be, it also takes a heavy toll on health. But if you learn how to spot the signs of depression and find effective ways to help, you or your loved ones can remain happy and vibrant throughout the golden years.

Recognizing depression in older adults starts with knowing the signs and symptoms. Depression red flags include:

- Sadness
- Fatigue
- Abandoning or losing interest in hobbies or other pleasurable pastimes
- Social withdrawal and isolation
- Weight loss; loss of appetite
- Sleep disturbances (difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, oversleeping, or daytime sleepiness)
- Loss of self-worth (worries about being a burden, feelings of worthlessness, self-loathing)
- Increased use of alcohol or other drugs
- Fixation on death; suicidal thoughts or attempts

If you're depressed, you may not want to do anything or see anybody. But isolation and inactivity only make depression worse. The more active you are—physically, mentally, and socially—the better you'll feel.

Some ways to combat and prevent depression include:

- **Getting out in to the world** – Try not to stay cooped up at home all day. Go to the park, take a trip to the hairdresser, or have lunch with a friend.
- **Connecting to others** – Limit the time you're alone. If you can't get out socializing, invite loved ones to visit you, or keep in touch over the phone or email.
- **Participating in activities you enjoy** - Pursue whatever hobbies or pastimes bring or used to bring you joy.
- **Volunteering your time** – Helping others is one of the best ways to feel better about yourself and regain perspective.

- **Taking care of a pet** – Get a pet to keep you company.
- **Learning a new skill** – Pick something that you’ve always wanted to learn, or that sparks your imagination and creativity.
- **Enjoying jokes and stories** – Laughter provides a mood boost, so swap humorous stories and jokes with your loved ones, watch a comedy, or read a funny book.
- **Maintaining a healthy diet** – Avoid eating too much sugar and junk food. Choose healthy foods that provide nourishment and energy, and take a daily multivitamin.
- **Exercising** - Even if you’re ill, frail, or disabled, there are many safe exercises you can do to build your strength and boost your mood—even from a chair or wheelchair.

Source: www.helpguide.org, www.mayoclinic.org

Kristin Kopp, At Home Solutions LLC, www.athomesolutionsllc.com

952-292-5801