
DEPRESSION

in People with Intellectual Disabilities

Signs and Symptoms

- Increased crying / moodiness
- Physical & emotional withdrawal (Ex. more time spent in bed)
- Noticeable changes in sleep &/or eating habits
- Loss of self-care / independence skills
- Activity / appointment refusal
- Loss of focus / decreased task completion
- Increased medical complaints

Syndromes with Higher Rates of Depression:

- Down syndrome
- Fetal Alcohol syndrome
- Prader-Willi syndrome
- Phenylketonuria

Some helpful things to remember:

- More than one symptom is necessary for a diagnosis — look for several symptoms to occur together
- A person with Intellectual Disability might have trouble accurately describing how they feel (Ex. “I’m sick” vs. “I’m sad”)
- It is important to rule out any possible medical conditions that could be causing the symptoms (Ex. hypothyroidism)
- Always assume the person *can't* maintain because of their illness, vs. they *won't* due to stubbornness

Fact or Fiction?

- 1.) A person with an intellectual disability is less likely to have a mental illness.
- 2.) A person must be able to self-report to be diagnosed with depression.
- 3.) Finding the right medication is only a part of providing effective treatment.
- 4.) Symptoms of Depression in a person with Intellectual Disability often manifest as challenging behaviors.
- 5.) Medications should be used to control behaviors.

Answers below

To Learn More:

National Association for the Dually Diagnosed (NADD): <http://www.thenadd.org>
The Pennsylvania Dual Diagnosis Forum: <http://greg.quuxuum.org/dual/facts.html>

1.) Fiction — the numbers are higher (20-40%) 2.) Fiction — diagnosis can be made from observer information 3.) Fact — lifestyle changes, skill building, and addressing other health issues also play a role 4.) Fact — onset of a new behavior or an increase / decrease in an existing behavior 5.) Fiction — medications should be used to treat the underlying syndrome / chemical imbalance: