

Literature and Coping Skills
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Lecture 21
Feeling Weird, Losing Touch-1

Hello everybody. I am Ajit K. Mishra, your course instructor for Literature and Coping Skills. I am here again with another segment of this course and this segment is defeating depression. If you all remember our last segment was on conquering fear and we discussed various aspects of fear and how to overcome fear by developing certain coping skills and coping strategies. So while talking about fear, I focused on fear and anxiety and then with the help of two very, very popular literary compositions that is We Are Not Proud and the Road Not Taken, we got to understand how to manage a fear by employing certain coping strategies.

In this module that is on defeating depression, I am going to talk about depression. The moment I use that word depression, you all get to know what it is all about and how it is very, very crucial to our understanding of our wellbeing. So, if our existence is depression free then we can say yes we have a good existence and a good life, but that is not the case depression is in the air, it is everywhere, we get to hear about it regularly and it is also utmost frequently searched words in the internet so that clearly suggests how depression has turned out to be one of our major problems and how it is very important for all of us to take care of depression as soon as possible. So let us start.

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The slide is titled "Defeating Depression" and features a yellow background. On the left, there is an illustration of a ladder leaning over a dark manhole with a green circular lid. To the right of the illustration is a list of items:

- Feeling Weird, Losing Touch-I
- Feeling Weird, Losing Touch-II
- Alfred Lord Tennyson, "Break, Break, Break"
- John Keats, "Ode on Melancholy"

On the right side of the slide, a man in a blue shirt is speaking. In the top right corner, there is a logo for NPTEL.

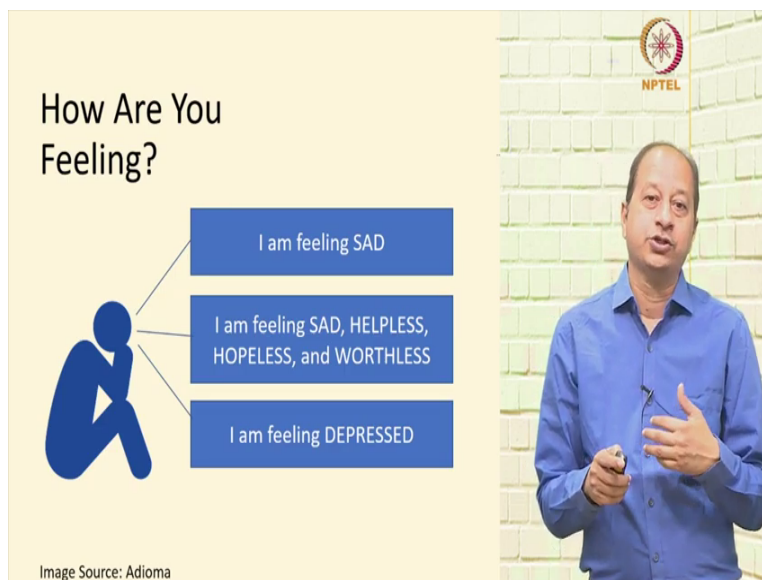
This module as I have already told you is going to focus on the various skills and strategies that we need in order to defeat this demon that is called depression. So, in order to defeat depression, we need to be very clear about the kind of images that we create about depression in our minds. You can see the image on your screen. It is of a manhole, a dark manhole, the underground and the lid right over it.

So, if somebody is inside the manhole and the lid is closed imagine the condition of the person. The person will be suffocated and the person will definitely succumb to death, so that is the kind of feelings we generally get when we come across depression or when we see people who are struggling with depression. So, they generally find themselves in a manhole. This is one of those images that we can create in order to understand depression better.

It is a manhole until and unless you try hard to push the lid out of the manhole, out of the top and then try to move out of it, it is not going to happen. That is exactly how we need to struggle with depression so that we are able to overcome it, we are able to fight our way back into life, so that is exactly how you need to push the manhole so that you can try to move out of it, by using a ladder. So this imagery probably suggests how we can try our best to come out of the manhole, the dark realm and we can return to life by using a few strategies and skills.

So, that is how I am going to focus in this segment, this module. There are four lectures in this module. Each of these lectures is going to focus on one important aspect of depression and the various strategies that we can imply in order to overcome this problem. So, I will be doing as feeling weird and losing touch twice, 1 and 2 and then I will be focusing on break, “Break, Break, Break” by Tennyson, a very famous Victorian poet and then finally I will be focusing on John Keats “Ode on Melancholy” to talk about how the various aspects of depression can be taken care of by implying the proper strategies and by cultivating the right kind of skills in us. So in this lecture I am going to focus on this particular aspect that is feeling weird and losing touch, the first part.

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So, now this is a very very interesting question that we generally come across, people ask us how exactly are you feeling, even when we are not recuperating from an illness. We generally are asked this question by people around us, how are you feeling? So most often the response is in a variety of ways. So this is in fact the core effect, a subject of experience, which we can not only figure out but also communicate at any point in time, because this is a neurophysiological state and I can always respond to such questions by saying I am feeling good or bad. I am feeling angry, I am feeling sad, I am feeling happy, I am feeling rejected and rejected, excluded. There are a variety of ways in which I can respond to this question.

So if you are in such a condition and then somebody asks you how are you feeling then what exactly are you going to do? You can probably say I am feeling sad. If you are really sad, you can say yes, I am feeling sad. Now, if you are feeling sad, that is fine, we all feel sad. You know by now that we have certain basic emotions like sadness, happiness, anger and variety of other emotions like disgust, surprise and then fear as well.

So, if I feel sad there is nothing surprising about it, because we all feel sad. We cannot guarantee that we will always be happy, you know that very well by now. So, we switch between the safe and the survival modes every now and then. So, feeling sad is not a very shocking thing and we generally feel sad whenever something does not go the way we wish or we expect, when we do not get the desired result or the desired thing, we generally tend to feel sad about it, but that is not a problem. That particular type of feeling will pause, will vanish in a short time, but then if you say I am feeling sad, helpless, hopeless and worthless.

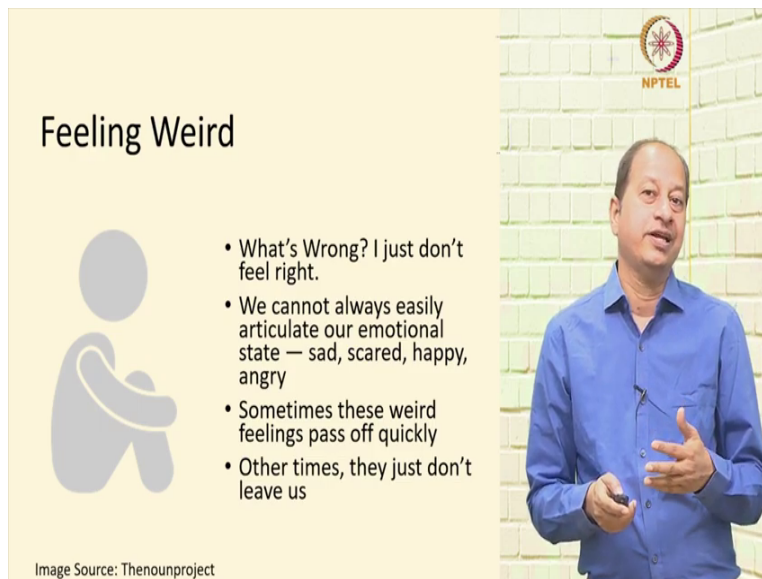
Now, you can see the difference between the first type of expression, the first response or reaction and the second one. There is a huge difference between the first and the second reactions. In the second one you are adding, you are saying yes, I am feeling helpless, I am feeling hopeless and I am also feeling worthless, that means if you have suddenly developed a kind of feeling that is located beyond the realm of sadness.

So, what exactly is that you are hopeless and you are helpless. You cannot do anything to overcome that particular situation when you know that you are of no use or all your efforts are of no use. You cannot overcome that particular moment, situation. Therefore, you are helpless, and you are hopeless because you have probably lost all hopes that that situation can be surmounted, you can overcome that particular problem and then you also feel worthless. Worthless because you think you are of no use. You do not have any merit or worth.

So, when somebody responds in this manner or reacts in this manner then we need to stop and think about it. Something wrong is going on inside that person's mind. That person is feeling depressed. That is an instance of depression, that is a sign of depression. That is not a sign of

sadness only. Because it has extended beyond sadness. Therefore, we need to take care of this particular type of response.

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The slide features a yellow background. On the left, there is a grey silhouette of a person sitting with their head in their hands. To the right of this icon is a bulleted list. In the top right corner, there is a circular logo with a star and the text 'NPTEL'. On the right side of the slide, a man in a blue shirt is speaking and gesturing with his hands. At the bottom left, there is a small text credit: 'Image Source: Thenounproject'.

Feeling Weird

- What's Wrong? I just don't feel right.
- We cannot always easily articulate our emotional state — sad, scared, happy, angry
- Sometimes these weird feelings pass off quickly
- Other times, they just don't leave us

Image Source: Thenounproject

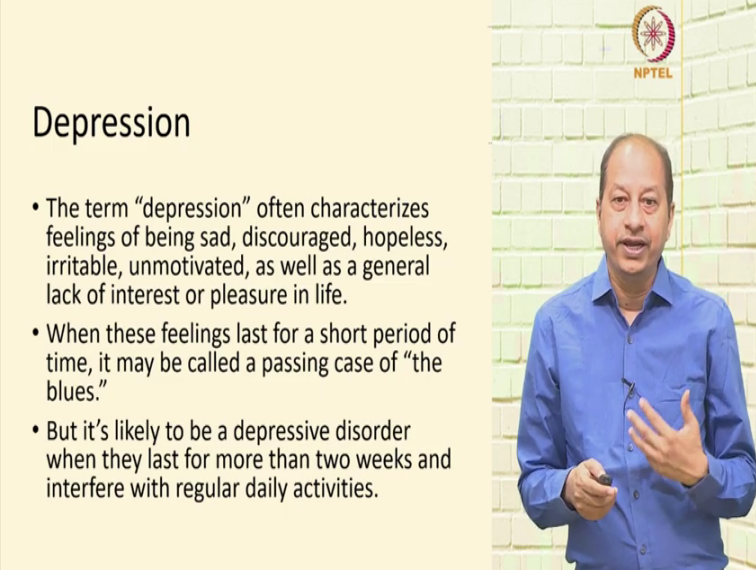
So, what exactly is that kind of feeling that we call feeling weird, that means when somebody says I am feeling weird I do not know. I am experiencing a lot of problems inside but I do not exactly know what they are and why they are so. That is the kind of weird feeling that we may experience at times and because people do that, people experience such weird feelings regularly and at times as well. So if somebody is feeling weird that means there is something wrong. So what is wrong? And if the response is I just do not know what is wrong, but I know there is something wrong and you cannot name it.

If you remember, if you cannot name it, you cannot tame it and it becomes extremely difficult for you to comprehend that problem. So, if you do not know the problem then it will be very difficult for you to overcome that problem. So then, and it is so because we cannot always articulate our emotional state, it is very, very difficult at times. Therefore, the stress, the imposes on articulation of our emotions is so strongly given, posited because we all need to articulate our strong emotions, unless we do that, we will be lost within the darker realm of those emotions, those distressing and disturbing emotions.

So, whether somebody is sad, scared, even happy or angry, if somebody cannot articulate those emotions, that means somebody is going to be embroiled in those emotions as well, so that is important and then sometimes these weird feelings pass off quickly and soon, we will not be

disturbed by such weird feelings, such experiences, but what if these feelings do not pass off quickly and they decide to stay with us, they decide to become part of our existence, what will happen? That is exactly what happens, because most of the time these weird feelings just do not leave us, they stay with us, they make a house here, in us and when that happens, that means there is something serious. There is a problem that we need to take care of quickly.

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The slide features a yellow background. On the left, the word "Depression" is written in a large, black, sans-serif font. Below it, there are three bullet points. On the right side of the slide, there is a video inset showing a man in a blue shirt speaking, with an NPTEL logo in the top right corner of the video frame.

Depression

- The term “depression” often characterizes feelings of being sad, discouraged, hopeless, irritable, unmotivated, as well as a general lack of interest or pleasure in life.
- When these feelings last for a short period of time, it may be called a passing case of “the blues.”
- But it’s likely to be a depressive disorder when they last for more than two weeks and interfere with regular daily activities.


So, that is exactly what we call depression because it is much more profound, devastating than just sadness, so therefore depression is something that we all need to look forward to so that we can understand, we can comprehend, it is on slot and we can devise various strategies to overcome this problem.

So what exactly is depression? We all know it characterizes feelings of being sad. You are sad, you are discouraged, you are hopeless and you are irritated easily. You feel unmotivated, lack of energy. There is no excitement. There is no pleasure in doing things and activities, and then a general overall lack of interest or pleasure in life. Now that is very, very important, because that points our attention towards the Eros instinct and when you lose that Eros instinct that means you are captured, you are seized by the Thanatos instinct and when the Thanatos instinct takes over you, you will lose contact with life. You will not like to exist. You will not like to live.

That is exactly what happens to people when they lose interest in life. When they do not have any excitement in life. And then when these feelings, the feelings of discouragement, hopelessness, demotivation and the variety of other feelings, if they last for a short period that is fine because they generally comes to us like the blues, so we can have our blue moments, because we can be sad, we can be rejected, we can be demotivated, we can be discouraged, hopeless at times.

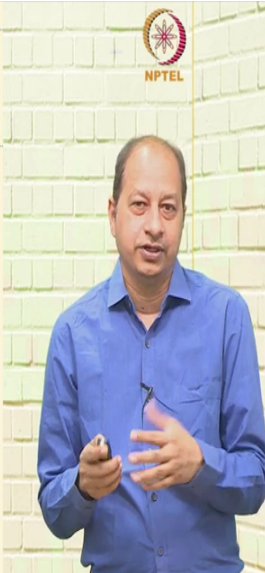
If the duration of such experiences is short enough then there is nothing to worry about. If it is the otherwise, if it is the other way, then that is a problem. We need to think about it seriously. So if they do not leave us quickly that means, and especially if we go by the DSM Manual if they stay with us for more than two weeks there is a cause for concern that means that is a sign of a depressive disorder. So we need to be very cautious about it.

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- Most people feel depressed at times. Losing a loved one, getting fired from a job, going through a divorce, and other difficult situations can lead a person to feel sad, lonely, scared, nervous, or anxious.
- Depression is more than just sadness. It interferes with daily life and causes pain for you and everyone who cares about you. It's a common illness, but a very serious one. (1-5, ADAA)
- These problems can become chronic or recurrent and lead to substantial impairments in an individual's ability to take care of his or her everyday responsibilities. At its worst, depression can lead to suicide. (WHO)




And then when we come to the other aspects of depression, we all know that most people feel depressed at times. that is not a problem, because this cycle of life is or played with a variety of shocks, disturbances, distressful moments, for example losing a loved one and getting fired from one's job and going through a bad or strained relationship and even a divorce and then variety of difficult situations in life.

All these things can lead to a feeling of sadness, loneliness, nervousness and anxiety. So this can be a short lived depression, but then if these feelings, if we are able to overcome these challenges like taking care of a strained relationship either by getting a divorce or by making it good, repairing it and then setting things right and then when we overcome the loss of a loved one by returning to life and activities then we can overcome these problems, but what if a person is unable to overcome these problems soon, that will lead to serious issues.

So that way we all can say depression is more than just sadness because once it sets in, once it becomes a part of our existence, it begins to interfere with our daily activities. How we eat, how we sleep, how we behave, how we view things, how we understand things, so just everything, it begins to interfere with all these activities of our life then that is a problem, that becomes a serious one.

And then finally this one is from the World Health Organization, the earlier ones is from the American Depression and Anxiety Association so that is a, so these problems can become chronic and recurrent and lead to substantial impairments, in an individual's ability to take care of his or her everyday responsibilities. At its worst depression can lead to suicide and that is a reality and that is why World Health Organization calls it one of the biggest health burdens, health hazards of our time. So, if we do not take care of the depression it is going to take care of us and that will be a cause of concern.

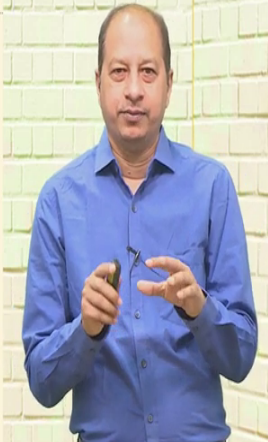
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Types of Depression

Major depression

- Interferes with the ability to work, study, eat, and sleep
- It may also take place spontaneously, during or after the death of a loved one, a romantic breakup, a medical illness, or other life event
- Some people with major depression may feel that life is not worth living, and some will attempt to end their lives.
- A subtype of major depressive disorder is melancholia



So there are a variety of types or various types of depression. I am not going to deal with each one of them in detail. I am just going to give a hint at each one of them and the most major ones, so that we gather some information about how depression is going to destroy or devastate our well being.


So, we can start with major depression, very popularly called MDD Major depressive disorder. So these are some of the aspects or features of this form of depression. This is one of the most serious forms of depression, because it interferes with one's ability to work, study, eat, sleep. That means it is going to disturb us in multiple ways. It is going to devastate us in multiple ways. So, therefore it is the most serious of all depression types.

So, it can also happen spontaneously during or after the death of loved one, a romantic breakup, a medical illness or any other life event that is shocking, that is disturbing for us. And then some people with major depression may feel that life is not worth living and that is a very, very serious condition because that is exactly where people decide to drop the gauntlet and recede into darkness that we call death by committing suicide or putting an end to their lives, which according to them is not worth living.

So, we come to a subtype of major depressive disorder that is melancholia. I am going to talk about melancholia in the third lecture of this module, when we focus on the various aspects of

melancholia. Especially when I talk about John Keats “Ode On Melancholy” in the fourth lecture of this module. So therefore I am going to focus on melancholia in detail.

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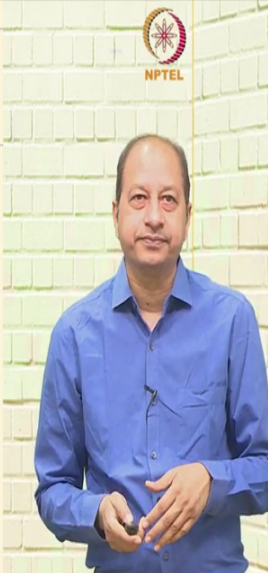


Persistent depressive disorder (Dysthymia)

- A form of depression that usually continues for at least two years
- It is less severe than major depression
- It can show up as stress, irritability, and mild anhedonia

Bipolar disorder

- Characterized by moods that shift from severe highs (mania) or mild highs (hypomania) to severe lows (depression)
- Severe changes in behavior go along with mood changes.




So, then we come to the second most important type of depressive disorder that is Persistent Depressive Disorder which is otherwise called Dysthymia. Yeah, this type of depression can be established when it usually sets for at least two years. That means if somebody continues to be within the grip of this particular type of distress for two years then you can say yeah, somebody is experiencing persistent depressive disorder. It is less severe in comparison to the earlier one that is major depressive disorder. And then it can also, like the previous one show up stress, irritability and mild anhedonia, that is mild, unlike the previous one, in which it is severe anhedonia that means you will not derive any pleasure from life's activities or life itself, so that will stop for you. So, therefore it is important that we understand.

Then we come to another very severe kind of depressive disorder that is Bipolar Disorder. So most of us are familiar with this kind of depressive disorder in which there is a severe mood swing. A person who is experiencing this type of disorder experiences extreme high and extreme low moods, starting with manic disorder to the depressive disorder that means when somebody is

experiencing manic disorder or somebody feels a lot of energy, irritability even, it can be happiness, it can be cheerfulness or even anger and somebody is unnaturally excited.

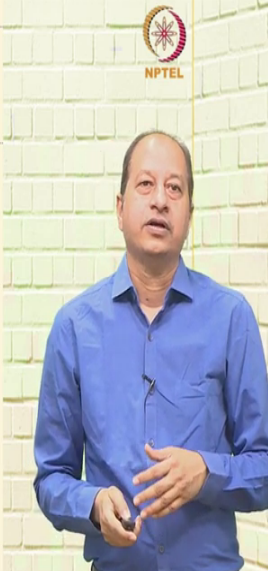
On the other hand, when we switch to the depressive state, somebody is not at all excited, somebody shows as if he or she has no energy and there is no intention to engage with life's activities. So it swings in between mania and depression. In between we can also experience hypomania so mild highs, so from highs to mild highs to extreme or severe lows, so that is how it visits us. And then it also causes severe changes in people's behavior who experience this kind of depressive disorder, so mood changes, and impulsive behavior are very, very frequently reported things in this kind of depressive disorder.

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Causes of Depression

- Depression is most likely due to either a combination of genetic, biological, environmental, and psychological factors or any one of these factors
- Trauma, loss of a loved one, a difficult relationship, or any stressful situation may trigger a depressive episode
- Lack of “Emodiversity,” the *Inside out* experiment moves viewers young and old to take a look inside their own minds



Now to the causes of depression. We all know there are various causes of depression so it can be a combination of genetic, hereditary, biological, environmental and psychological factors or any one of them as well. For example, many researchers have found that those people who experience depression frequently or chronic depression have a smaller hippocampus, the organ that is responsible for memory and emotions, so hippocampus, a smaller hippocampus that means the hippocampus shrinks.

There is still some debate over whether depression actually causes the hippocampus to shrink or the shrunken hippocampus, the smaller hippocampus in people turns out to be a reason for depression. People are still debating that but in any case, people who do not experience any kind of depression have a larger hippocampus compared to those who experience depressive disorders. That means people are unable to process their emotions properly or regulate their emotions properly. If you remember, I talked about the importance of emotion regulation for each one of us.

So, a trauma can also be a cause of depression alongside loss of a loved one, difficult relationships and stressful situations. They can trigger depressive episodes, situational depression as well, but then if they stay with us, they do not leave us. That means they have become a part

of our existence and they will continue to disturb us for a prolonged period of time. And then this is a very very important aspect of lack of emodiversity.

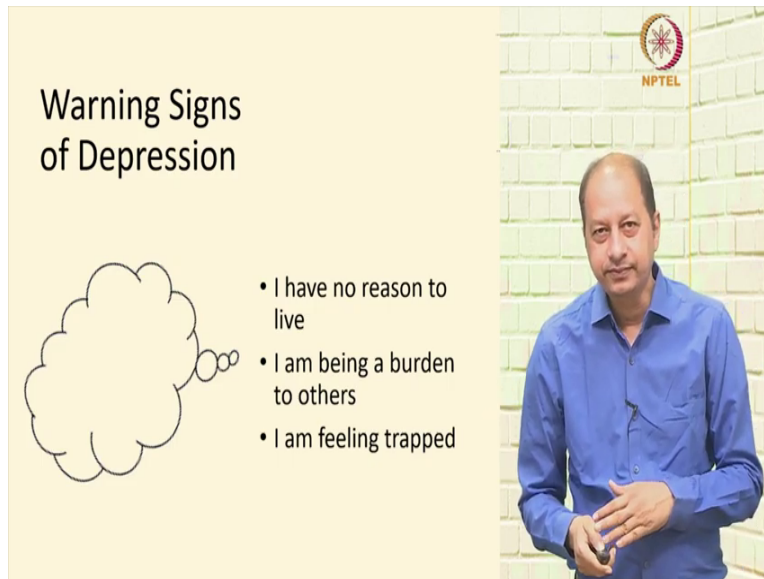
That means if we are not awake to the challenges of disturbing emotions, for example, we live in a culture that tells us that sadness is a bad emotion to experience. So we generally do our best to stay away from sadness, but sadness is not a bad emotion we all know that by now.

Because it teaches us a lot of things, it prepares us for greater and bigger challenges in life, so emodiversity that means emotional diversity is very, very important. That means if somebody knows how to regulate happiness, the person should also know how to regulate sadness, how to manage sadness, anger, fear, these disturbing emotions as well. So since we live in a culture where that discourages emotional diversity, most of us find it very, very difficult, the moment we come across disturbing emotions. So we begin to crumble. We begin to fragmentize, so that is a problem.

So you can watch this Pixar movie Inside Out, it is an animated movie. It is a wonderful experiment because it moves all the viewers, young and old, to take a look inside our own minds, something that we generally do not know or do not do. So, therefore you can try this movie because it tells us how to cope with a variety of emotions, and how to regulate a variety of emotions.

So emodiversity can be a major cause of depression, because we do not know how to handle sadness. We allow it to settle down, stay with us, because we do not know how to overcome it. Just imagine if somebody knows how to overcome sadness, after a certain period of time the person can never ever experience depressive states. Since most of us do not know how to overcome or take care of sadness we generally feel trapped within the depressive states.

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The slide features a yellow background. On the left, there is a thought bubble icon. To its right, the title 'Warning Signs of Depression' is written in a bold, black font. Below the title, a bulleted list contains three items: 'I have no reason to live', 'I am being a burden to others', and 'I am feeling trapped'. On the right side of the slide, there is a photograph of a man in a blue shirt standing in front of a wall of yellow sticky notes. In the top right corner of the slide, there is a small circular logo with the text 'NPTEL' below it.

Warning Signs of Depression

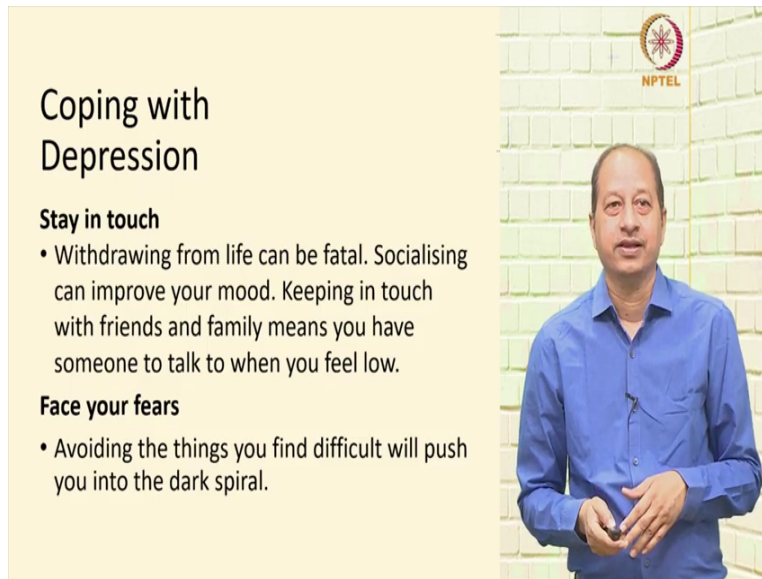
- I have no reason to live
- I am being a burden to others
- I am feeling trapped

So, there are few warning signs of depression that we all need to be awake to, for example this can be I have no reason to live, that means you have suddenly lost all interest in life or excitement about life and you do not have even a single reason to live or continue to live. If this is a statement that is a warning sign of depression, because that tells you that you have a very low self-esteem or self-worth.

So, I am being a burden to others, that means you do not see yourself as a valuable entity or your existence as of some use to people around you and you begin to treat yourself as a burden so you can see the kind of images that these statements create when they present the views over depression. So burden and then reason and then finally I am feeling trapped.

So you feel as if you are trapped either inside the manhole, you remember that manhole image I showed you all at the beginning of this lecture. Inside that manhole, inside a dark room, inside a dark ally, so it can be anything. So if somebody begins to feel trapped that means somebody is unable to move out of it. Then you know that is a warning signal, because that person does not know what to do about it. So all those are the warning signals or warning signs of depression and we need to be aware of these warning signs so that we can extend some help to people around us.

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The slide features a yellow background on the left with text and a photograph of a man in a blue shirt on the right. The man is standing in front of a wall of yellow sticky notes. In the top right corner of the slide, there is a circular logo with a star and the text 'NPTEL' below it.

Coping with Depression

Stay in touch

- Withdrawing from life can be fatal. Socialising can improve your mood. Keeping in touch with friends and family means you have someone to talk to when you feel low.

Face your fears

- Avoiding the things you find difficult will push you into the dark spiral.

And then we come to the most important thing that is coping with depression. No one of us will certainly like not to cope with depression and we will allow depression to set in, we will allow depression to devastate and destroy us, that is something that probably none of us would like to be or not like to have. So we have to cope with depression. There are a variety of ways I have listed a few so that you get an idea of how to cope with depression.

Staying in touch because the moment depression sets in, people begin to withdraw, withdraw from people around us and then they begin to withdraw from themselves. For example, I am feeling trapped, I have no reason to live, I have become a burden on others. You begin to withdraw from others and yourself as well. That is not going to help so staying in touch is definitely going to help a lot.

So the moment somebody begins to withdraw from life it is going to be fatal. So the answer is socializing, so we know how to socialize, but the problem is during depressive states people forget how to socialize. They think that it is not worth socializing, therefore they do not socialize, but keeping in touch with friends and family members means that you can find someone to talk to when you are feeling low, so that is going to help us overcome those attacks of depression.

And then this is one of the most important things, I have already talked about it while discussing Death Be Not Proud that there is no way we can escape our fears.

The best way to escape our fears is to overcome them, is to conquer them, so that is the reason why I talked about conquering fear. That is the best way to overcome your fears, handle your fears, know how to manage your fears. So it is a good idea to face your fears, so that you do not become habitual to avoidant behavior or avoidant strategies, that is also a strategy, that is also a coping strategy or skill but it is a very bad coping skill, avoidance. So, every time we are faced with some kind of challenge or difficulty. If we begin to avoid that means we are pushing ourselves down the spiral, the dark spiral or we are pushing ourselves in to the manhole, the dark manhole. So that is not going to help.

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Take A Different View

- Avoid psychological myopia, stop repeating those soul-sucking negative thoughts, and do not get stuck.

Visualizing a Happy Memory

- Overcome emotional catatonia, and counter the gloom with an immediate dose of positivity

Reconfigure your self-image

- Don't master self-hatred, and a 'comfortable discomfort' with no exit door



And then we come to this particular important strategy, that is of taking a different view because we all know that there is something called psychological myopia, shortsightedness that means we allow our mind to be fixed on one particular thing. In this case a negative thought cycle, which becomes a vicious cycle for example if I continue to say that I am worthless, I am worthless, I am worthless. I will turn out to be worthless, because I have fixed my focus on that particular thing which is a negative thing. I need to switch my focus from the negative to the positive. So if

you remember I also talked about I think I can, I think I can, so that is the power of positives thinking.

So we need to shift the focus from the negative to the positive so that we do not get stuck. So allowing ourselves to get stuck in negative thoughts will definitely destroy or devastate us and then we come to a very interesting thing that is visualizing a happy memory. I have already talked about how visualization can empower us, can help us overcome a lot of problems in life and that is the reason why these poetic compositions do offer a tremendous amount of help when it comes to overcome the challenges of life through visualization. They help us visualize things along with the characters in those compositions.

So when we begin to visualize we can overcome emotional catatonia. So emotion catatonia is of course a big problem. It is a kind of numbness when you do not know what kind of emotion you are experiencing and the type of emotion that you need to regulate, so you become totally numb to your emotional stimuli. So you develop emotional catatonia. And then if you can overcome emotional catatonia you can encounter the gloom with a dose of positivity.

So then we come to the idea of reconfiguring one's self-image. So once you become to reconfigure your self-image, for example I am worthless, I am hopeless, I am helpless. You have created a negative self-image for yourself. The moment you begin to reconfigure that you can look at the other possibilities. You begin to talk about yourself. Especially when you are visualizing a happy memory. If you can recall a happy memory when you did something well, when you are rewarded, when you achieved, you felt proud, great, those memories can help you sustain yourself.

Similarly, those memories can also help you reconfigure your self-image. If somebody has created a negative self-image for himself or herself, the same person can think of the other possible images for the same person and that is going to help you reconfigure your self-image. In depression most people begin to master self-hatred and they also begin to master a comfortable discomfort, so they generally tend to show a comfortable approach where is the discomfort. That is depression.

So they become friends with depression. It is all about whom you are making friends with or who you are making friends with. So, if you make friends with a negative self-image, discomfort, or self-hatred, that means you are going to be in that company forever and that company is going to destroy you, because there is no exit door. If you have to exit you need to create that exit door. You have to create that exit door by reconfiguring a self-image.

So what can you do? You can think of coping with these kinds of depression through these strategies. If that does not happen then the hand that was there out of the dark hole, the manhole will promptly sink inside, and there will be no help because people will not be able to discover us and they will not heed our call for help. So, therefore it is very, very important that we understand these aspects of depression and we begin to take care of depression in a much more focused manner.

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The slide is titled "References" and lists five sources. To the right of the text is a video frame showing a man in a blue shirt speaking, with the NPTEL logo in the top right corner.

References

- https://adaa.org/sites/default/files/Depression-ADAA_Brochure-2016.pdf
- https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/depression/19-mh-8079-depressionbasics_140843.pdf
- https://www.who.int/mental_health/management/depression/who_paper_depression_wfmh_2012.pdf
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/compassion-matters/201507/the-value-sadness>
- <https://www.psycom.net/therapist-plan-for-overcoming-depression/>

So that is how we come to the end of this lecture on depression, and these are the sources from where I have borrowed most of the ideas used in this lecture. In the next lecture I am going to talk about the other aspects of depression. So, thank you very much for joining me.