

# **Dysthymia**

**Dysthymia (or dysthymic disorder)** is characterized by chronic state of mild depression lasting at least 2 years that negatively impact the individual in occupation, relationship, and other life functions. (In children and adolescents, mood can be irritable and duration must be at least 1 year.) Common symptoms include:

- poor appetite or overeating
- insomnia (too little sleep) or hypersomnia (too much sleep)
- low energy or fatigue
- low self-esteem
- poor concentration or difficulty making decisions
- feelings of hopelessness

Psychotherapy is the treatment of choice for dysthymia. Often, antidepressant medication is also recommended as an adjunct to therapy because of the chronic nature of the depressive symptoms.

Psychotherapy is used to treat this depression in several ways. First, supportive counseling can help to ease the pain, and can address the feelings of hopelessness. Second, cognitive therapy is used to change the pessimistic ideas, unrealistic expectations, and overly critical self-evaluations that create the depression and sustain it. Cognitive therapy can help the depressed person recognize which life problems are critical, and which are minor. It also helps them to learn how to accept the life problems that cannot be changed. Third, problem solving therapy is usually needed to change the areas of the person's life that are creating significant stress, and contributing to the depression. Behavioral therapy can help you to develop better coping skills, and interpersonal therapy can assist in resolving relationship conflicts.

Dysthymia is a treatable disorder. Individuals with dysthymia sometimes feel hopeless and helpless about their condition. However, there is hope. The first step is to seek help from a qualified therapist. With his or her help, the sufferer can find greater emotional freedom and open up potentials for joy.