

Depression and Erectile Dysfunction Podcast Transcript

Today, we're going to talk about erectile dysfunction and depression. So, first, a couple of words about depression. Depression is a serious [mental health](#) and mental illness condition. The American Psychological Association, according to recent studies, estimates that somewhere in the order of 30% of men will experience at least a bout of depression over their lifetime.

Thirty percent is a significant number. And certainly when we're talking about erectile dysfunction, and the prevalence that it has, and its connection to mental health conditions that also have very high prevalence, it's important to keep in mind the significance of some of these depressive factors and the interplay and impact that it can have on your erections.

One other note here is that if you are experiencing depression, addressing just that symptom for the sake of alleviating your erectile dysfunction is not advisable and in no way is adequate treatment.

Bona fide depression should be treated, either with a [mental health professional](#) or with a medical professional, and should not be viewed as just a cause of erectile dysfunction alone.

All that being said, many men will experience symptoms of depression and they may not qualify for a bona fide diagnosis of depression.

I think of depression as existing on a scale. I think we all experience elements of depression at times, and it's those elements that potentially can have a negative impact on our erections that we're going to be focusing on in today's episode.

Again, as we've emphasized in previous episodes, you do not need to have a diagnosis of depression to experience symptoms of depression. And even without a diagnosis, those symptoms can have a negative impact on your erection. Please don't assume that because you don't have a diagnosis of depression that these symptoms cannot be impacting you. I've seen many men, similar to you, who experienced one or two symptoms of depression but didn't quite qualify for a diagnosis.

And those symptoms may have been caused by particular situations in their life and really were not indicative of a long-term mental health or mental illness, and yet they were still significant enough to negatively impact erections, to play a role in erectile dysfunction to the point that when they were resolved, so was the ED.

So, with that, let's look at some of the primary symptoms of depression that can have a [negative impact on your erections](#). Two symptoms of depression that I'm going to categorize together are loss of energy and change in sleep patterns, in particular and more commonly, fatigue.

Both of these symptoms, loss of energy and fatigue, are going to make erections more difficult. Yes, your erections require energy, both physical and mental. Even if you do not have depression, there are times that you might just feel drained, exhausted.

And if you think about those times, you might be able to recall that there was a [decrease in libido](#), a decrease in erections, decrease in sexual activity, whether that's alone or [with a partner](#), because your level of energy makes a difference.

Sometimes that exhaustion, that fatigue, that lack of energy is driven by a lack of sleep. But in other instances, it can be driven by depression. In any case, addressing that can make a difference in your erection process.

Another hallmark symptom of depression is what's called anhedonia. Anhedonia means the loss of pleasure or excitement and enjoyment in activities that previously were enjoyable for you. We've already established in previous episodes the [brain-body connection](#) and how important it is to the erection process.

Pleasure and desire are important, active ingredients in erections. If you don't want sexual pleasure, if you're not interested in it, it is going to be very difficult to gain and maintain an erection.

One of the ways to differentiate between loss of libido and anhedonia is to take some time and to assess if this is happening in any other areas of your life. Generally speaking, if you're experiencing anhedonia, it will not be limited to the sexual realm and it may be present in other areas, including hobbies, social activities, other forms of bodily pleasure, and the like.

If this is only happening in the sexual realm, it could be anhedonia and it could be related to a general loss of libido, a topic that we will cover in a different episode.

Another common feature of depression is feeling worthless or experiencing low self-esteem. This is not exclusive to depression, but it certainly is a feature of depression. How you feel about yourself is going to impact your erections.

If you feel good about yourself, if you feel attractive, if you feel worthy of sexual pleasure, you are far more likely to gain and maintain an erection than if you are maintaining a belief that you are not worthy of sexual pleasure, that you're not worthy of any pleasure, that you're not worthy of a partner, that you're not worthy of a relationship. Those thoughts, those beliefs, those feelings erode the natural erection process.

The last area that we'll touch on is not quite a symptom of the diagnosis of depression but it certainly is a feature that is common with depression, and that is isolation. If you prefer to be alone, there's nothing wrong with that necessarily, some people do prefer to be alone.

However, if there's an onset of that feature in your life, along with some of the other things that we've touched on, it may be a sign of depression. Isolation, or the desire to be alone, can have a negative impact on [relationships](#).

It can negatively impact your erection when you're with a partner because if you don't want to be there, your mind is going to inform your body, and your erections are going to be negatively impacted by that.

Now, I want to reemphasize, if you are experiencing any of these symptoms, it is important to consider working with a medical or mental health professional to assess if you have depression.

If you are depressed, a more comprehensive treatment approach to the depression is likely going to benefit not only your erection process but will likely benefit a whole bunch of other areas of your life and really is the appropriate and correct way to address this.

If, however, you've reached the conclusion, either on your own or with a professional, that the particular symptoms that you're experiencing are less about a diagnosis of depression and more about

something particular, either to your sexual life, or an issue in your relationship, or it's something that is temporary, working on a strategy to address those specific manifestations, those specific symptoms is something that can be helpful in addressing the symptoms of depression and ultimately improving your overall erections.

It's very important to not neglect this part of the treatment process, especially because so many of the symptoms of depression directly impact the desire part of the process, the wanting, the yearning, the excitement, which are key in activating not only your erections but also the efficacy of medication, when it is needed, still requires desire and arousal.

If you are not experiencing that, the medication is far less likely going to work and going to yield the outcomes that you want.