

CHAPTER 1

What Are the DSM Criteria for Depression?

Diagnosing Mood Disorders Such as Major Depressive Disorder

Consistent with the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR; APA, 2000), the first step in diagnosing any mood disorder is to assess for any current or past *mood episodes*, which are clusters of specific mood symptoms that occur over a period of time.

The four types of mood episodes to consider are shown below:

MOOD EPISODES
1. Manic
2. Hypomanic
3. Major Depressive
4. Mixed

These episodes are then used to make the diagnosis of the appropriate *mood disorder*.

In the DSM, mood disorders may be *bipolar*, meaning that there has been or currently is evidence of a manic, hypomanic, or mixed episode in the clinical picture, or they may be *unipolar*, meaning that there is evidence of one or more *major depressive episodes* (MDEs) or dysthymia, without any current or past manic, hypomanic, or mixed episodes.

It is important to note that bipolar mood disorders may contain past or a present MDE in the clinical picture, in addition to the manic, hypomanic, or mixed episodes that define them. Unipolar mood disorders, however, cannot contain past or present manic, hypomanic, or mixed episodes. The presence of these types of episodes indicates a bipolar mood disorder.

DSM Criteria for Depression

MOOD DISORDERS

1. Bipolar
2. Unipolar

Bipolar I, bipolar II, and a chronic low-level mood disturbance called *cyclothymia* are the bipolar mood disorders, shown below:

BIPOLAR MOOD DISORDERS

- Bipolar Disorder I: A past or present manic or mixed episode. (May include a MDE)
- Bipolar Disorder II: A past or present hypomanic episode AND a past or present MDE, with no manic or mixed episodes. (Must include a MDE)
- Cyclothymia: Chronic low-level hypomanic and depressive symptoms.

Major Depressive Disorder and a chronic low-level version of depression called Dysthymia are the Unipolar Mood Disorders.

UNIPOLAR MOOD DISORDERS

- Major Depressive Disorder
- Dysthymia

Major Depressive Disorder

For an individual to be diagnosed with major depressive disorder, they must have experienced at least one MDE but no manic, hypomanic, or mixed episodes.

DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA FOR MAJOR DEPRESSIVE DISORDER

- One or more MDEs
- No current or past manic, hypomanic, or mixed episodes

What constitutes an MDE

Key Point

An acronym useful for remembering the features of a depressive episode is **SIGECAPSS**, in which each letter of the word stands for a specific feature of the episode.

SIGECAPSS

Sadness

Interest

Guilt

Energy

Concentration

Appetite

Psychomotor

Sleep

Suicidality

An MDE is characterized by the presence of at least five SIGECAPSS, occurring for at least two weeks, and representing a change from previous functioning.

It is important to note that at least one of the features must be a depressed (or irritable) mood or a loss of interest or pleasure (the first S and the I in the SIGECAPSS acronym).

The SIGECAPSS

S—Sadness

- In depression, the mood is depressed most of the day, nearly every day. This may be indicated by either the report of the client (e.g., feels sad or empty) or observations made by others (e.g., appears tearful).
- Note that depression can also be characterized by an *irritable* mood, particularly in children.

I—Interest

- In depression, there is often markedly diminished interest or pleasure in all, or almost all, activities most of the day, nearly every day.

DSM Criteria for Depression

G—Guilt

- Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt may be present, and are not merely self-reproach or guilt about having the disorder.

E—Energy

- Depressed individuals often complain of excessive fatigue or loss of energy.

C—Concentration

- They often describe or show impairment in their ability to think, concentrate, or make decisions.

A—Appetite

- In its typical form, depression causes a diminished appetite and unintended weight loss. In atypical depression, appetite is increased or weight is gained.

P—Psychomotor

- In depression, psychomotor behavior (referring to the way one moves and gestures, including speech rate) may be either slowed or, conversely, show agitation.

S—Sleep

- As with appetite and weight, depression typically interferes with sleep, but may cause excessive sleep in its “atypical” expression.

S—Suicidality

- Of course, some individuals suffering depression may have thoughts of death and dying. They may have thoughts or have a plan for taking their own life, and in some cases may have attempted suicide.

DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA FOR AN MDE

- Five (5) or more SIGECAPSS present during the same two-week period
- Symptoms represent a change from previous functioning
- At least one is depressed (or irritable) mood, or a loss of interest or pleasure.

In addition, the SIGECAPSS cannot occur along with manic symptoms, such as accelerated speech, flight of ideas, or heightened impulsivity, as seen in what is called a mixed episode. Mixed episodes are treated diagnostically like manic episodes, in that their presence represents a bipolar mood disturbance.

Finally, the depressive symptoms cause clinically significant distress or disability through impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

Chapter Review

1. Discuss the relationship between mood episodes and mood disorders.
2. What are the four major types of mood episodes?
3. What are the bipolar and unipolar mood disorders?
4. What is the acronym for remembering the criteria of an MDE?
5. For what does each letter of the acronym stand?
6. What are the diagnostic criteria for major depressive disorder?

Chapter Review Test Questions

1. Which of the following meets the criteria for an MDE, assuming its presence for more than two weeks?
 - A. Fatigue, insomnia, withdrawal, loss of appetite, concern about symptoms
 - B. Irritability, agitation, argumentativeness, disorganized thinking, impulsivity
 - C. Sadness, fatigue, excessive appetite, excessive sleeping, psychomotor slowing
 - D. Sadness, anxiety, recent loss of job, insomnia, worry
2. A person currently meeting the criteria for an MDE could have which of the following types of mood disorders?
 - A. Unipolar
 - B. Bipolar
 - C. Either unipolar or bipolar
 - D. Neither unipolar nor bipolar

Chapter Reference

American Psychiatric Association. (2000). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th ed., text revised). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.