

Secret Signs of Hidden Depression

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Lots of people walk through life trying to hide their depression. Some people with hidden depression can conceal their depression like pros, masking their symptoms and putting on a “happy face” for most others.

People with concealed depression or hidden depression often don’t want to acknowledge the severity of their depressive feelings. They believe that if they just continue living their life, the depression will just go away on its own. In a few cases, this may work. But for most folks, it just drags out the feelings of sadness and loneliness.

Dealing with the black dog of depression through concealing one’s true feelings is the way many of us were brought up — we don’t talk about our feelings and we don’t burden others with our troubles. But if a friend or family member is going through something like this — trying to hide or mask their depression — these signs might help you discover what they’re trying to keep concealed.

6 Signs of Concealed Depression

1. They have unusual sleep, eating or drinking habits that differ from their normal ones.

When a person seems to have changed the way they sleep or eat in significant ways, that’s often a sign that something is wrong. Sleep is the foundation of both good health

and mental health. When a person can't sleep (or sleeps for far too long) every day, that may be a sign of hidden depression.

Others turn to food or alcohol to try and quash their feelings. Overeating can help someone who is depressed feel full, which in turn helps them feel less emotionally empty inside. Drinking may be used to help cover up the feelings of sadness and loneliness that often accompany depression. Sometimes a person will go in the other direction too — losing all interest in food or drinking, because they see no point in it, or it brings them no joy.

2. They wear a forced “happy face” and are always making excuses.

We've all seen someone who seems like they are trying to force happiness. It's a mask we all wear from time to time. But in most cases, the mask wears thin the longer you spend time with the person who's wearing it. That's why lots of people with hidden depression try not to spend any more time with others than they absolutely have to. They seem to always have a quick and ready excuse for not being able to hang out, go to dinner, or see you.

It's hard to see behind the mask of happiness that people with hidden depression wear. Sometimes you can catch a glimpse of it in a moment of honesty, or when there's a conversation lull.

3. They may talk more philosophically than normal.

When you do finally catch up with a person with masked depression, you may find the conversation turning to philosophical topics they don't normally talk much about. These might include the meaning of life, or what their life has amounted to so far. They may even open up enough to acknowledge occasional thoughts of wanting to hurt themselves or even thoughts of death. They may talk about finding happiness or a better path in the journey of life.

These kinds of topics may be a sign that a person is struggling internally with darker thoughts that they dare not share.

4. They may put out a cry for help, only to take it back.

People with hidden depression struggle fiercely with keeping it hidden. Sometimes, they give up the struggle to conceal their true feelings and so they tell someone about it. They may even take the first step and make an appointment with a doctor or therapist, and a handful will even will make it to the first session.

But then they wake up the next day and realize they've gone too far. Seeking out help for their depression would be admitting they truly are depressed. That is an acknowledgment that many people with concealed depression struggle with and cannot make. Nobody else is allowed to see their weakness.

5. They feel things more intensely than normal.

A person with masked depression often feels emotions more intensely than others. This might come across as someone who doesn't normally cry while watching a TV show or movie suddenly breaks out in tears during a poignant scene. Or someone who doesn't normally get angry about anything suddenly gets very mad at a driver who cut them off in traffic. Or someone who doesn't usually express terms of endearment suddenly is telling you that they love you.

It's like by keeping their depressive feelings all boxed up, other feelings leak out around the edges more easily.

6. They may look at things with a less optimistic point of view than usual.

Psychologists refer to this phenomenon as *depressive realism*, and there's some research evidence to suggest that it's true. When a person suffers from depression, they may actually have a more realistic picture of the world around them and their impact on it. People who aren't depressed, on the other hand, tend to be more optimistic and have expectations that aren't as grounded in their actual circumstances. Non-depressed people believed they performed better on laboratory tasks than they actually did, compared to people with depression (Moore & Fresco, 2012).

It's sometimes harder to cover-up this depressive realism, because the difference in attitude may be very small and not come across as something "depressing." Instead of saying, "I really think I'll get that promotion this time!" after having been passed over it four previous times, they may say, "Well, I'm up for that promotion again, but I doubt I'll get it."