

# Life Events & Depression

## What Are Life Events?

These are changes that often occur suddenly in someone's life. These events may be viewed as either pleasant or unpleasant, but in either case, may be experienced as stressful.

Life events have been classified according to how stressful they are. Particularly stressful events include the death of a spouse, divorce, being fired or laid off from a job, or emergency surgery. Other events include moving, retiring, getting married or taking care of elderly parents.

## Why Are Life Events Important?

There is good research that links life events with the onset of stress, physical symptoms and psychological symptoms. Physical symptoms may include stomach pains, headache, or changes in appetite. Psychological symptoms may include anxiety, excessive worrying, or difficulty making decisions.

## Depression and Life Events

Research suggests that significant life events often occur in the three months prior to an episode of depression. It has also been shown that the risk of depression can increase six-fold in the 6 months following a significant life event. Events such as heart attack, bypass surgery, and stroke are often followed by the onset of depression. Vulnerability factors include poor health status, ongoing stressful circumstances, and little or no social support.



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