



Suppressed emotions and health

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Oppressing emotions can have both mental and physical health effects



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Suppressing emotions can lead to chronic stress, anxiety, and depression. When emotions like anger, sadness, or fear are consistently ignored, they can trigger the release of stress hormones, which over time, may weaken the immune system and increase the risk of developing conditions such as hypertension, heart disease, and digestive problems. So how do you handle all of this? Experts weigh in.

Emotion Cues

Emotions that are repressed are those that you unknowingly steer clear of. This is distinct from suppressed emotions, which are feelings you deliberately evade because you are uncertain of how to handle them. “Suppressing emotions can occasionally serve as a temporary remedy if you ensure to confront those emotions sooner rather than later. But that doesn't mean they simply disappear. Instead, they may show up as a range of psychological or physical symptoms. Usually, people tend to repress intense and negative emotions, especially those associated with discomfort or other unpleasant experiences like anger, frustration, sadness, fear, and disappointment. It is common to suppress emotions you consider ‘bad’ or believe other people might judge you for expressing,” says Dr Harshil Shah, Consultant Psychiatrist, Apollo International Hospital, Ahmedabad.

Health Issues

When individuals bottle up their feelings, they often experience increased stress and anxiety, which can manifest in a range of physical symptoms such as headaches, digestive issues, and chronic pain. “On a psychological level, repressed emotions can lead to mental health conditions like depression and anxiety disorders. The body and mind are deeply interconnected, and unresolved emotions can trigger physiological responses that compromise health,” explains Neha Cadabam, Senior Psychologist and Executive Director, Cadabams Hospitals. Archana Singhal, Counsellor and Family Therapist, Founder, Mindwell Counsel, Delhi, adds, “When emotions are suppressed, the unresolved feelings do not disappear; they build up internally, creating a persistent state of stress. This ongoing tension can escalate into chronic anxiety, as the mind is constantly occupied with unprocessed emotions. The longer these feelings are suppressed, the more difficult it becomes to manage stress, leading to a vicious cycle of anxiety and emotional turmoil.”

Suppressing Emotions

Bottling up feelings can harm your health because it prevents you from processing and dealing with emotions in a healthy way. When emotions are suppressed, they don't simply disappear; they often resurface in more harmful ways, such as through increased stress, anxiety, and even physical symptoms like heart disease or high blood pressure. “These suppressed emotions have a significant impact on our mental and sometimes even physical health. These thoughts don't disappear when you ignore or suppress them, they usually manifest and surface back as stress and anxiety. There is also some evidence that suggests these suppressed emotions lead to physical pains like headaches, back pain, and digestive issues. Suppressed emotions often lead to difficulties in falling or staying asleep as well. Poor sleep, in turn, leads to physical and mental health problems, creating a vicious cycle,” says Raman Mittal, Founder, Idanim, a meditation app.

Helping Hands

Seeking help is a critical step in managing suppressed emotions and improving overall health. Speaking with a mental health professional can provide a safe space to explore and address suppressed emotions. Dr Jyoti Kapoor, Founder & Director, Manasthali Wellness says, “talking to a mental health professional can offer coping strategies, cognitive-behavioural techniques, and support in understanding and managing your feelings. Sometimes talking to someone you trust can help you process emotions and feel less alone. Mindfulness techniques, such as meditation, deep breathing, and yoga, can help you become more aware of your emotions and manage them more effectively.” Practices like meditation, journaling, or even engaging in creative outlets such as painting can also be powerful tools for emotional expression. “I often encourage people to get involved in community activities, whether it's volunteering, environmental initiatives, or joining support groups. These not only provide an outlet for emotions but also foster a sense of connection and belonging as well as creating spaces where people feel safe to express themselves and seek the support they need. Remember, seeking help is a proactive step toward building resilience and achieving a healthier, more balanced life,” says Dr. Malini Saba, psychologist, & founder Anannke Foundation.

Take Charge

Nurturing your thoughts and emotions is essential for happiness and living a fulfilling life. It's important to realise that while life can be painful and traumatic, you are stronger than your thoughts. “Becoming aware of these disturbances and addressing them allows you to remove the emotional burden. Like caring for an injured child, you must care for the parts of yourself that have been hurt,” concludes Dr Dharmesh Shah, Founder & Director of Holistica World.

(Source : Deccan Chronicle)

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