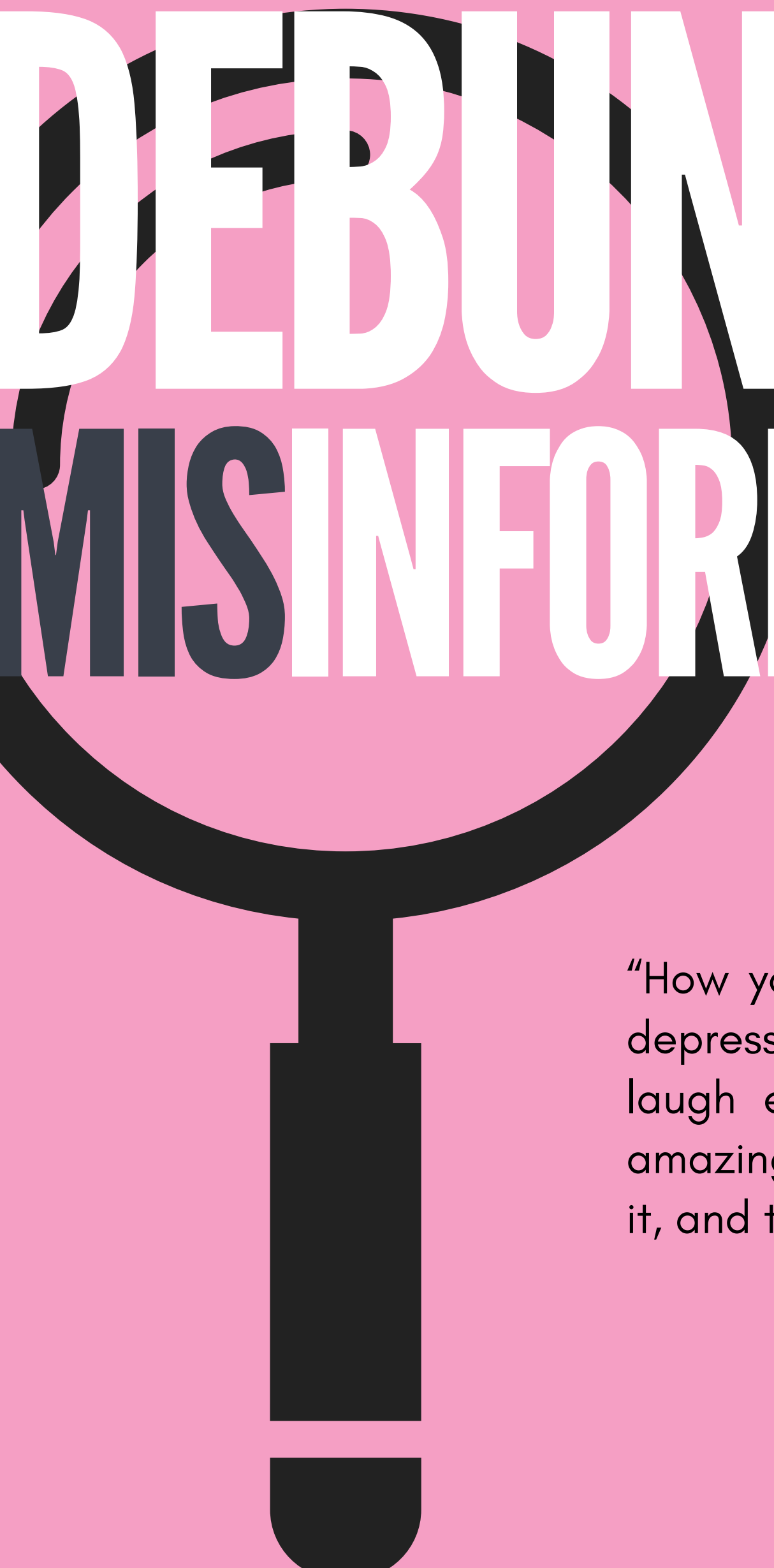
PSYC 337 | INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

# DEBUNKING MISINFORMATION



“How you can tell if someone is depressed: they act goofy and laugh everything off, they give amazing advice when you need it, and they zone out a lot."

"HOW YOU CAN TELL IF SOMEONE IS DEPRESSED: THEY ACT GOOFY AND LAUGH EVERYTHING OFF, THEY GIVE AMAZING ADVICE WHEN YOU NEED IT, AND THEY ZONE OUT A LOT."

# WHY THIS IS MISINFORMATION & WHY IT MATTERS

This video is misleading as it portrays depression in a narrow way, suggesting it always looks like goofiness, zoning out, or giving great advice. While some individuals with depression may behave this way, these are not universal signs. Depression varies widely, with symptoms like sadness, fatigue, and loss of interest. By reducing it to vague traits, the video creates a false impression of what depression looks like.

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This misinformation is harmful as it promotes an inaccurate view of depression, reinforcing stereotypes that can obscure real symptoms. This misrepresentation can make it harder to recognize real symptoms in oneself or others. It also reinforces the false belief that depression is easy to spot, further contributing to misunderstanding and stigma. Additionally, it may invalidate those who don't fit this description, making them feel their struggles are less legitimate and discouraging them from seeking help. By oversimplifying depression in this way, it becomes harder for people to recognize the seriousness of the condition and access the support they need.

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# IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE

# ACTUAL DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA OF MDD

Based on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5)

**THE INDIVIDUAL MUST EXPERIENCE AT LEAST FIVE (NOT THREE) OF THE FOLLOWING NINE SYMPTOMS DURING A TWO-WEEK PERIOD [1]:**

- Depressed mood (such as persistent sadness and/or hopelessness)
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities (anhedonia) [2]
- Significant changes in appetite or weight
- Sleep disturbances (either insomnia or excessive sleep)
- Psychomotor agitation or retardation (restlessness or slowed movements)
- Fatigue or low energy
- Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Suicidal thoughts or behaviours

**... WITH AT LEAST ONE SYMPTOM BEING DEPRESSED MOOD OR LOSS OF INTEREST/PLEASURE [1]**

[1] American Psychiatric Association, 2013; [2] Serretti, 2023

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# OVERSIMPLIFICATION

## TWO PEOPLE CAN HAVE VERY DIFFERENT SYMPTOMS

Not all depressed individuals behave the same way, this oversimplifies and overlooks the complexity of major depressive disorder (MDD) and variability between people.

**227** POSSIBLE SYMPTOM COMBINATIONS THAT CAN MEET THE DIAGNOSTIC REQUIREMENTS FOR MDD [3]

## DEPRESSION CAN MANIFEST IN DIFFERENT WAYS [4]:

**MOOD POLARITY**
Unipolar vs. Bipolar

**RECURRENCE**

**SYMPTOM SEVERITY**

**SYMPTOM PATTERNS**
Melancholic, Atypical, Psychotic, or Anxious features

**ONSET TRIGGERS**
Specific events, Seasonal changes, or Age-related factors

[3] Park & Kim, 2021; [4] Thase, 2013

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# SYMPTOM OVERLAP

## MANY DISORDERS SHARE SIMILAR SYMPTOMS

## "ZONING OUT"

### MAY BE OBSERVED IN:

- Depression
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)
- Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Bipolar Disorder
- Substance Use Disorder [5, 6]

**USING BEHAVIOUR ALONE TO IDENTIFY DEPRESSION IS AN OVERSIMPLIFICATION.**

**THIS HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPORTANCE OF A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION BY A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL TO ACCURATELY DIAGNOSE AND DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN CONDITIONS.**

[5] Elkins et al., 2014; [6] Montano & Weisler, 2011

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# CLINICAL DIAGNOSIS

## HOW TO ACTUALLY TELL IF SOMEONE IS DEPRESSED

### CLINICAL INTERVIEWS:

"Gold standard" for diagnosing MDD and assessing the accuracy of self-reported questionnaires [7]

**WHEN SCREENING COMES OUT POSITIVE FOR POSSIBLE DEPRESSION, DIAGNOSIS IS CONFIRMED WITH DSM-5 CRITERIA [8].**

Basic laboratory tests can help confirm a depression diagnosis by ruling out medical conditions that may mimic (symptoms) of depression [8]:

**THYROID STIMULATING HORMONE (TSH) TESTING**
Thyroid disorders (psychomotor changes, fatigue, weight and appetite changes)

**COMPLETE BLOOD COUNT (CBC)**
Anemia (fatigue, anorexia, and weight loss) and infections (depressive symptoms)

**VITAMIN B12 TESTING**
Pernicious anemia (mood disturbances and insomnia)

**IF THE DSM-5 CRITERIA FOR DEPRESSION IS NOT MET, OTHER MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS SHOULD BE EXPLORED [8].**

[7] Davison et al., 2009; [8] Maurer et al., 2018

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# COGNITIVE SYMPTOMS

## SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION ARE NOT ALWAYS OBSERVABLE

**EXTERNAL/BEHAVIOURAL SYMPTOMS MAKE UP ONLY PART OF THE DIAGNOSIS OF DEPRESSION:**

**DIAGNOSTIC AND STATISTICAL MANUAL OF MENTAL DISORDERS, FIFTH EDITION**

## DSM-5 CRITERIA FOR COGNITIVE SYMPTOMS [1]

- Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Suicidal thoughts

**OTHER COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENTS THAT CAN BE EXPERIENCED BY DEPRESSED PATIENTS INCLUDE DEFICITS IN LEARNING AND MEMORY, EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING, PROCESSING SPEED, ATTENTION, AND CONCENTRATION [9].**

[1] American Psychiatric Association, 2013; [9] Pan et al., 2019

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