

TOPIC 8: Psychological Problems



LI: What is the biological explanation of depression?

Starter – Retrieval Quiz

1. Define unipolar depression.

2. Define bipolar depression.

3. Define sadness

4. What are the three **main** symptoms of unipolar depression?

5. What are two other symptoms of unipolar depression?

TOPIC 8: Psychological Problems



LI: What is the biological explanation of depression?

Starter – Retrieval Quiz

1. Define unipolar depression.	A mood disorder that causes a person to feel constantly sad, lose interest and enjoyment and to have reduced energy levels.
2. Define bipolar depression.	A mood disorder that causes a person's mood, activity levels and energy to change from one extreme to another.
3. Define sadness	A normal emotional response to something unpleasant, painful or unhappy.
4. What are the three main symptoms of unipolar depression?	Low mood, loss of interest and pleasure, reduced energy levels
5. What are two other symptoms of unipolar depression?	Changes in sleep patterns, Changes in appetite levels, Decrease in self-confidence, Reduced concentration/attention, Feelings of guilt/worthlessness, Negative thoughts about the future, Self-harm/suicidal thoughts.

In this Power Point:

You Must:

- ☐ Know a biological cause of depression
- ☐ The name of the neurotransmitter involved in depression and why it might cause someone to have depression.
- ☐ Evaluation of this biological theory.

Academic Vocabulary: Recap

Unipolar depression

A mood disorder that causes a person to feel **constantly** sad, lose interest and enjoyment and to have reduced energy levels.

Bipolar depression

A mood disorder that causes a person's mood, activity levels and energy to change from one extreme to another.

Sadness

A normal emotional response to something unpleasant, painful or unhappy.

Recap: Diagnosing Unipolar Depression

1. **Low mood**
2. **Loss of interest and pleasure**
3. **Reduced energy levels**
4. Changes in sleep patterns
5. Changes in appetite levels
6. Decrease in self-confidence
7. Reduced concentration/attention
8. Feelings of guilt/worthlessness
9. Negative thoughts about the future
10. Self-harm/suicidal thoughts

The top 3 are the key symptoms.

Diagnosing

5 or 6 symptoms = moderate depression

7 or more symptoms = severe depression

For a diagnosis, the symptoms need to be present all the time and should persist for longer than two weeks.

Learning Intentions

4/5 (All) – Identify the role of neurotransmitters in depression.

6/7 (Most) – Explain and apply the role of neurotransmitters in depression.

8/9 (Some) – Evaluate the biological explanation of depression with reference to the reductionist/holistic debate.

Low

High

What is your initial confidence towards the LIs?

What causes depression?

Depression can have two causes. This lesson will focus on the biological side.

Biology

Things inside
us...

Psychology

The way we
think and things
around us...

Biological explanation

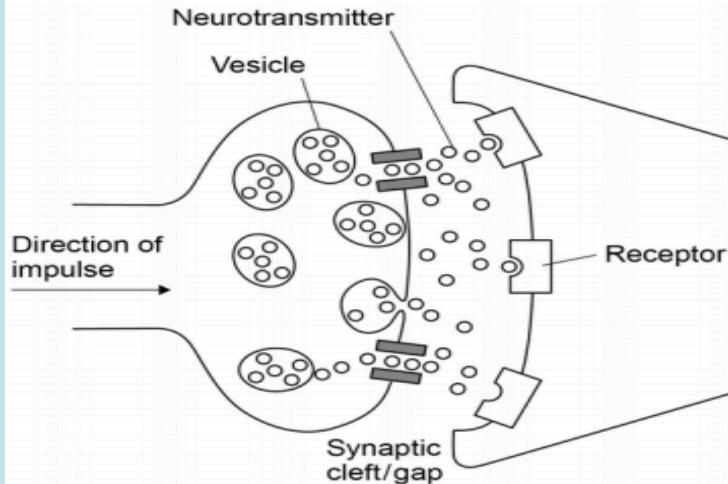
In our brains, we have tiny chemicals called neurotransmitters. Their job is to send messages around the brain and to our muscles (we will learn how in topic 7).

Certain neurotransmitters are believed to have an impact on our happiness.

The key one for us to know is serotonin. It has been found that if you do not have enough serotonin, you are more likely to be depressed.

Biological explanation

Neurotransmitter imbalance – lack of serotonin



This is an image of a synapse. Something that you may have looked at in biology. However, we will go over it when we do topic 7.

Serotonin affects memory, sleep and appetite.

People with low amounts of serotonin in their synapses experience low moods as the receptors are not getting stimulated enough.

Why do some people have low serotonin?

- It may be genetic
- They may not eat enough high protein food or carbohydrates (these produce tryptophan which helps us produce more serotonin).

What evidence is there for this?

Positive or negative evaluation for the theory?

Research using brain scans showed that depressed people had lower levels of serotonin than a control group.

However, it is hard to determine the correlational cause - do these people become depressed due to low serotonin, or do they have low serotonin due to depression?

Giving people more serotonin doesn't always improve things.

Reductionist means
'too simple'.

This idea is very **reductionist** – there may actually be lots of causes of depression, not just low neurotransmitters (some depressed people have normal serotonin levels!)

Read the evaluation and put it into your own evaluation grid.

Apply it: Padena's Depression

Padena has been suffering from depression since she lost her job and has gone to a GP who prescribed her a course of antidepressants as he explained to her that she had a medical problem that the drugs would fix. However, after 6 months on her medication, Padena still feels depressed. She has tried other things to help her, with some working better than others. For example, she finds that eating foods like chocolate gives her mood a temporary lift but this does not last for long. Her friend Molly told her to think more positively but Padena has not found this advice very useful as she has always thought in a negative way and finds it too difficult to change.

1. What evidence is there that Padena's depression is not just due to an imbalance of neurotransmitters? (2)
2. What evidence is there that her depression can in some way be linked to low serotonin levels? Explain your answer. (2)

Exam Questions

1. *What is the name of the neurotransmitter that causes depression? (1)*

The neurotransmitter is called...

2. *Explain the biological explanation of depression. (3)*

The biological theory of depression says that...

3. *Evaluate the biological explanation of depression. (3)*

One good thing about the biological theory is...

Learning Intentions

4/5 (All) – Identify the role of neurotransmitters in depression.

6/7 (Most) – Explain and apply the role of neurotransmitters in depression.

8/9 (Some) – Evaluate the biological explanation of depression with reference to the reductionist/holistic debate.

Low

High

What is your new confidence towards the LIs?

TOPIC 8: Psychological Problems

LI: What is the biological explanation of depression?

Consolidation:

Begin creating a Topic 8 consolidation poster on 'Depression'

You can currently include:

- Types of depression and symptoms
 - The biological explanation

You need to leave room for:

- The psychological explanation
- Two depression treatments