

We need to reevaluate how we define depression

In the wake of the [Germanwings tragedy](#), mental health advocates are deeply concerned about misleading generalizations that may [increase the stigma](#) surrounding depression and make people less likely to seek the help that they need. But there's been little discussion of perhaps the most misleading generalization of all: the label "depression" itself.

What we call depression seems to be a grab bag of conditions involving different parts of the brain's circuitry. And while it's still early days, a fresh understanding of depression's diversity should lead to better treatments.

[About 7 percent of U.S. adults](#) experience at least one episode of [major depression](#) each year, according to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). In terms of how many healthy years it takes from people's lives, depression is the most damaging of all the mental and behavioral disorders. Yet according to the latest research, major depression isn't a distinct disorder after all — despite being listed as such in the psychiatrists' bible, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.

"When we throw around the label 'depression,' we can often be referring to very different things," Daniel Foti, a clinical psychologist at Purdue University in Indiana, told BuzzFeed News.

Some of the confusion arises from the fact that depression is in many cases a secondary symptom of another mental disorder — about [three quarters of people](#) who meet the *DSM's* criteria for major depression have at least one other psychiatric condition. But even "pure" cases of major depression can manifest themselves very differently: Some people lose interest in activities they once found pleasurable, while others become unusually sensitive to negative experiences. Still others become irritable and angry.

Read full, original article: [Depression Isn't What You Think It Is](#)