

The link between depression and misinformation explained | Mashable

By Rebecca Ruiz

March 7, 2022

When Dr. Roy Perlis partnered with peers and colleagues to conduct an ongoing survey of Americans about COVID-19, the Harvard Medical School psychiatrist knew the team had to ask about mental health. Since the survey's spring 2020 launch, the subject has appeared alongside questions about other aspects of respondents' lives, including social media use, news consumption preferences, political affiliation, and socialization habits. As misinformation about COVID-19 surged and survey participants reported worse mental health, Perlis wondered: Could depression make people vulnerable to misinformation?

A hallmark of depression, negative cognitive bias typically makes someone more likely to remember the worst thoughts, feelings, and events — and to dwell on them. Faced with an onslaught of terrible news during a pandemic, Perlis thought that people with depression might experience more skepticism, disbelief, and distrust.

"If we talk about people wearing rose-colored glasses, some people with depression are wearing dark-colored glasses where the world looks like a darker place," he told Mashable. "If you believe the world is a dangerous, scary place, if someone tells you that a vaccine is dangerous, or that a vaccine is part of a conspiracy, you might be more inclined to believe it."

[...]

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