

Depression: Moving Forward

Recognize and Overcome Depression

Overcoming a difficult time in your life can be hard. Everyone gets a little down sometimes amidst life's challenges. But there are times when sadness, loss of interest in life, and trouble with sleep or appetite can hang on for weeks. These problems may get in the way of the things you normally do. When this is the case, depression may be the cause.

Depression is more than just feeling bad or upset after a troubling event. It is a serious medical condition. And it's very common. Each year, millions of Americans suffer with depression.

People who are depressed often get better—and continue to improve over time—with treatment.

It's important to remember, though, that depression is one of the most treatable illnesses. Treatment works in about 80 to 90 percent of depression cases. And this often happens in just a few weeks, given the right care.

In this issue of *Your Source*, you'll learn about:

- The different types of depression
- Recognizing the warning signs of depression
- How to help a family member who may be depressed
- How treatment—often including professional counseling and medication—can help beat depression.

If you, a family member or a co-worker suffer with depression, don't try to go it alone. Get help from a health professional. There are many tools you can access to help you cope with depression and move forward.

Go Online Today! Log on to access *Depression: Moving Forward* and other helpful resources.



Employee Assistance Program

We care, just call.

1-800-222-0364

1-888-262-7848 TTY Users
www.FOH4YOU.com



Log on here!



Different Types of Depression

Common types of depression include:

Major depression—The sad, empty feelings with this chronic illness can be so intense that eating, sleeping, or just getting out of bed become almost impossible.

Postpartum depression—This can occur in women soon after giving birth.

Seasonal affective disorder—This causes people to be depressed mostly during autumn and winter, when there is less daylight.

Dysthymia (pronounced *dis-THI-mee-uh*)—People may be depressed, have low self-esteem and trouble concentrating over a number of years.

Bipolar disorder—This causes swings between lows (depression) and highs (mania).

Warning Signs of Depression

- Feelings of helplessness, guilt, hopelessness, or worthlessness
- Sadness, crying, tearfulness
- Trouble concentrating or making decisions
- Loss of interest in pleasurable activities
- Anger or emptiness
- Fatigue, sleeping too much or too little

The good news: treatment works!

When a Family Member has Depression

Depression can strike anyone at any time, in good times or bad. Although external factors such as a tough economy can appear to be likely causes, in truth the source of depression isn't always known.

Seek Help as Soon as Possible

If you think that someone in your family—young or old—is suffering with depression, it's important to recognize the symptoms and assist the person in getting help. Children, adolescents and elders will need the most help and guidance.

Your family member may not agree to get treatment right away. They may need to hear from you and others—more than once—that that they deserve to feel better, and that proper treatment will help. Be persistent in getting help for them!

Learn About Treatment and Services

Try to learn as much as you can about depression and the services available to you through your organization's health benefits. Psychologists, social workers and psychiatrists diagnose depression and provide counseling or psychotherapy. The most common treatments for depression are professional counseling, anti-depression medication, or a combination of the two. Encourage your family member to stick with the treatment plan. This includes taking prescribed medicine exactly as directed. Improvement may take several weeks.

Moving Forward

You can support your family member's mental health in the following ways:

- Give emotional support by listening carefully and offering hope.
- Make sure your family member keeps all therapy appointments.
- Accept the occasional feelings of frustration or helplessness that you may have—they are quite normal.
- Remember to take seriously any threats to self or others that the person may express. Seek professional advice.
- Finally, take care of yourself. Supporting a depressed person can make you feel "down in the dumps." Make sure you get out and do something for yourself.

Remember that additional information, self-help tools and counseling resources are available to you through your program 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Which gender is more likely to be affected by depression?

- A. Women are more likely to suffer with depression.
- B. Men are more likely to suffer with depression.

The correct answer is A. According to the National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH), depression affects twice as many women as men, regardless of racial and ethnic background or income. There are a number of medical and stress-related risk factors that increase women's chances of developing depression. But there is no single cause that explains why more women than men suffer depression.

Now That's an Idea!

Tips for Coping with Depression

Assess yourself—To learn if you are depressed, check out a confidential depression self-screening tool on the member website under Tools/ Assessments.

Avoid alcohol and drugs—These substances can cause or worsen depression.

Exercise regularly—Do something physical daily, even if it's just walking around the block.

Do something new to refresh your psyche—Walk or drive to a new place, or try a new restaurant.

Express yourself—Get to the heart of your feelings through writing, painting, etc. Do something creative.

Be good to yourself—Practice relaxation exercises, visualize pleasant scenes, take a warm bath, listen to soft music, or read a good book—whatever soothes you the most!