

Dealing with Depression



What Is Depression?

Depression is a complex illness with a variety of causes, symptoms, and cures. The depressed person has little interest in things that are usually enjoyable. He or she can barely function. Because s/he feels alone, afraid, exhausted, and may even want to give up on life, the effects of depression can be both psychological and physical.

Symptoms:

- Feeling worthless, helpless, hopeless, may appear sad
- Loses all interest in people and enjoyable activities
- Loses or gains weight due to change in appetite
- Tired all the time or agitated
- Sleeps more than usual or has trouble sleeping
- Has trouble concentrating
- Frequently cries
- Has aches and pains that appear to have no physical cause
- Feels ashamed of having these difficulties
- Thinks about death, and/or attempts suicide

What to do about it?

1. Recognize that thoughts are powerful and do affect feelings. Listen in to your thoughts. What is that heavy, serious, critical, shaming voice inside your head saying?
2. Monitor those thoughts by writing them on paper. Listen for imperatives, putdowns, doubts, regrets that occur over and over. For example, "You should have...", "You'll never..." "You've got to..."
3. Combat these statements with realistic, balanced rebuttals. Stop the negative ("stinking") thinking.
4. Forgive yourself for all past failures or shortcomings; then forgive others for theirs. Remember Confucius's words: Our greatest glory is not in never failing; but in rising every time we fail.

Need Help??

1. If you have persistent thoughts of suicide, talk to a Counselor as soon as possible (215.968.8189).
2. Call Suicide Hotline, 1800SUICIDE, National Hopeline Network.
3. Ask for help from a supportive friend or Counselor; talk about your losses. See a physician to rule out physical problems and check out the possibility of medication.
4. Get physical exercise – walk, swim, ride a bike, workout at the Bucks County Community College Wellness Center free to students and staff.
5. Eat lots of crisp, dark green vegetables raw and cooked. Consider vitamin supplements.
6. Don't self-medicate. Eliminate street drugs and alcoholic beverage; they only make things worse. If you can't do this, go for help immediately.
7. Avoid people who tell you to "snap out of it." Depression is real illness and a variety of treatments may be needed.
8. Make a list of things that please you. Do one of these each day or at least think about it. "Thinking" alone can alter brain chemistry, just as biochemical substances and processes can alter thinking and feeling.
9. Fight inertia. Write a daily plan of action every day. Follow it.
10. Lend a hand. Help yourself by helping others. Do volunteer work through a political, community or church organization.
11. Spend an hour outside each day and sing while you are outside.
12. Simplify your life. Accept things beyond your control.

For more information:

Free Depression Screening - <http://www.ulifeline.org/sdirect/>

Further reading - <http://www.psychologyinfo.com/depression>

Resources for Anxiety and Depression <http://www.adaa.org/>

Further Reading:

Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment, Martin E. P. Seligman, 158 S465 in BCCC Library

Cognitive Therapy of Depression, 616.852 C676 in BCCC Library

Let's Talk About Depression, Pamphlet 14,087Min BCCC Library

Mayo Clinic on Depression, 616.852 M473 in BCCC Library

To talk with a Bucks Counselor, call 215.968.8189 or email counseling@bucks.edu to schedule an appointment.

It's FREE and confidential.