

# Dealing with Depression

Depression is a common problem that can affect anyone. Statistics indicate that about 1 in 20 Americans (over 11 million people) get depressed every year. Depression is experienced by young children, the elderly and all ages in between. Twice as many women as men report feelings of depression. Depression is a real medical condition that needs to be treated as such. If you experience five or more of the following symptoms for longer than two weeks, if you feel suicidal, or if the symptoms are severe enough to interfere with your daily routine, see your doctor:

## Signs of Depression

- Loss of interest in things once enjoyed
- Feeling sad, blue or down in the dumps
- Feeling either sluggish or restless
- Feeling worthless or guilty
- An increase or decrease in appetite or weight
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Problems concentrating, thinking, remembering, or making decisions
- Difficulty falling asleep or sleeping more than normal
- Persistent physical complaints, such as headaches, digestive problems, or other aches/pains
- Sexual problems
- Feeling pessimistic or hopeless
- Feeling anxious or worried
- Loss of motivation



## Types of Depression

**Situational depression** is related to factors in an individual's life which cause him/her to experience distress, such as stress, breakup of a relationship, death of a loved one, etc. Situational depression is usually treated effectively by psychotherapy geared toward getting the individual actively re-engaged in his/her life.

**Chronic depression** often has a biological component or chemical imbalance which causes the individual to be depressed most of the time or in cyclical patterns. Chronic depression is generally treated with a combination of medication and psychotherapy. Such a combination of treatments has been found to be the most effective method of handling chronic depression.

Both types can have as their cause a variety of underlying factors.

## Causes of Depression

There are many factors that may contribute to depression. It is most likely caused by a combination of biological, psychological, and environmental conditions. Certain life situations (such as extreme stress or grief) may produce feelings of depression. In some instances, depression may even occur when life is going well. Alcohol and drugs also have been identified as probable contributors to depression. Just as the causes of depression may vary, there are various methods of treating it.

## *Treatment for Depression*

Successful treatment alleviates the symptoms of depression and helps the individual return to a more normal life. As with other problems, the longer one avoids dealing with depression, the more difficult it is to overcome.

During treatment with a therapist, the individual and counselor work together to explore feelings and relationships in order to develop new coping skills. This process often involves modifying thoughts and behavioral patterns. Occasionally, medication is prescribed to relieve the most troublesome effects of depression. There are also steps that the depressed person can take to help themselves.

## *Keys to Helping Yourself*

There are several things you can do to help relieve the symptoms of depression. The following is a list of options you might choose to try.

- Get physical exercise
- Stay engaged in activities even if you don't "feel" like it
- Become aware of negative self-statements and change them into positive statements
- Talk to family or friends
- Take time to do things for yourself, like go to a movie, read a book, engage in a hobby, etc.
- Avoid drugs and alcohol
- Reward small gains
- Eat well and nutritiously
- Increase your intake of vitamins B and C
- Talk with a psychological professional if the depression persists more than two to three weeks or if you feel suicidal



## *Helping Depressed Friends*

Here are some suggestions you might want to use for helping a friend who is feeling depressed.

- Be supportive and ***listen*** to your friend's concerns
- Encourage him/her to see a counselor
- Encourage him/her to remain active in his/her life
- Help your friend eat well and take care of him/herself
- Be patient and also recognize your limits as a friend
- Solicit help from professionals if the depression lasts more than three weeks or if you are concerned about suicide

*If you think you, or a friend, might be depressed and particularly if there are thoughts of suicide, call the **Counseling Center** to speak with one of the counselors. We can be reached at **660-562-1220** or by coming by the office at 120 Wells Hall.*

*All services are free and confidential.*

*Other emergency numbers include:*

***Campus Safety – 562-1254***

***University Health Center – 562-1348***

***St. Francis Mental Health Crisis Line – 562-2227 or 1-800-841-3866***