

# Depression

## Getting Help

A Library and Resource Center on Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellness

### HOW CAN I HELP MYSELF IF I AM DEPRESSED?

If you have depression, you may feel exhausted, helpless and hopeless. It may be extremely difficult to take any action to help yourself. But it is important to realize that these feelings are part of the depression and do not accurately reflect actual circumstances. As you begin to recognize your depression and begin treatment, negative thinking will fade.

#### To help yourself:

- Engage in mild activity or exercise. Go to a movie, a ballgame, or another event or activity that you once enjoyed. Participate in religious, social or other activities.
- Set realistic goals for yourself.
- Break up large tasks into small ones, set some priorities and do what you can as you can.
- Try to spend time with other people and confide in a trusted friend or relative. Try not to isolate yourself, and let others help you.
- Expect your mood to improve gradually, not immediately. Do not expect to suddenly "snap out of" your depression. Often during treatment for depression, sleep and appetite will begin to improve before your depressed mood lifts.
- Postpone important decisions, such as getting married or divorced or changing jobs, until you feel better. Discuss decisions with others who know you well

and have a more objective view of your situation.

- Remember that positive thinking will replace negative thoughts as your depression responds to treatment.

### HOW CAN I HELP A FRIEND OR RELATIVE WHO IS DEPRESSED?

If you know someone who is depressed, it affects you too. The first and most important thing you can do to help a friend or relative who has depression is to help him or her get an appropriate diagnosis and treatment. You may need to make an appointment on behalf of your friend or relative and go with him or her to see the doctor. Encourage him or her to stay in treatment, or to seek different treatment if no improvement occurs after six to eight weeks.

#### To help a friend or relative:

- Offer emotional support, understanding, patience and encouragement.
- Engage your friend or relative in conversation, and listen carefully.
- Never disparage feelings your friend or relative expresses, but point out realities and offer hope.
- Never ignore comments about suicide, and report them to your friend's or relative's therapist or doctor.
- Invite your friend or relative out for walks, outings and other activities. Keep trying if



(continued)

he or she declines, but don't push him or her to take on too much too soon. Although diversions and company are needed, too many demands may increase feelings of failure.

- Remind your friend or relative that with time and treatment, the depression will lift.

### **WHERE CAN I GET HELP?**

If you are unsure where to go for help, ask your family doctor. Others who can help are listed below.

#### Mental Health Resources:

- Mental health specialists, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, or mental health counselors
- Health maintenance organizations
- Community mental health centers
- Hospital psychiatry departments and outpatient clinics
- Mental health programs at universities or medical schools
- State hospital outpatient clinics
- Family services, social agencies or clergy
- Peer support groups
- Private clinics and facilities
- Employee assistance programs
- Local medical and/or psychiatric societies
- You can also check the phone book under "mental health," "health," "social services," "hotlines," or "physicians" for phone numbers and addresses. An emergency room doctor also can provide temporary help and can tell you where and how to get further help.



### **What if I or someone I know is in crisis?**

If you are thinking about harming yourself, or know someone who is, tell someone who can help immediately.

- Call your doctor.
- Call 911 or go to a hospital emergency room to get immediate help or ask a friend or family member to help you do these things.
- Call the toll-free, 24-hour hotline of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255); TTY: 1-800-799-4TTY (4889) to talk to a trained counselor.
- Make sure you or the suicidal person is not left alone.

U.S. Department of Health and Human



Services, National Institutes of Health,  
National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH).,  
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/depression.cfm>  
2008