

Depression: More than just the blues

August 2011 Monthly Bulletin



Knowing When to Get Help

Is it depression?

How do you know if you're depressed? That's a good question! Depression can be a byproduct of stress and anxiety. And it can also occur without apparent reason. **More...**

Worklife Balance

Caregiver's critical statistics

Did you know that almost one third of all families in the United States are caring for an elderly parent or relative, adult child with disabilities or friend?¹ The stress of caregiving puts caregivers at increased risk for burnout and health problems, including depression. **More...**

Mind Matters

The age of depression

Anyone, at any age can suffer from clinical depression. Depression is seen in children, teens, adults and elders — but can sometimes be hard to identify. The symptoms don't always look the same across age groups — or even genders. **More...**

Telling the Difference

Are you having a sinking spell?

There are many ways to describe feeling low. What is the difference between "a sinking spell" and a true depression? **More...**

¹www.nfacares.org



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Knowing When to Get Help

Is it depression?

How do you know if you're depressed?
That's a good question!

Depression can be a byproduct of stress and anxiety. It can also be linked to other causes, such as:

- Chronic pain
- Some medications
- Substance abuse
- Medical conditions, including heart disease and cancer

And it can also occur without apparent reason.

Some things to consider

Take a moment to think about the following statements. How much do they apply to someone you care about — or perhaps even yourself?

- My energy level isn't what it used to be. I can't get geared up to do anything.
- I don't feel like doing things I used to enjoy, or even hanging out with friends or family.
- I've been restless, anxious or irritable the past month or so.
- On many days lately I feel so sad it hurts.
- I often have little or no appetite at all.

- I find myself wanting to sleep all the time — or I almost can't sleep at all.
- I've been having trouble focusing and making decisions lately.
- I'm often overwhelmed with feeling I'm totally worthless.
- I sometimes wonder if it's worth going on.

Dealing with depression

Do any of these statements hit home for you, or a person close to you? These are some of the classic signs of depression. If you identify with a number of them and have felt that way for awhile, you may be struggling with depression. While everyone feels sad sometimes, that passes. With depression, the feelings are stronger and last longer. Everything in one's life can be impacted by depression.

The good news: there are many treatments for depression

It can be hard to believe it when you are feeling depressed, but depression is highly treatable. If you feel you may be struggling with depression, reach out for help. Don't let life pass you by. Get back to feeling good about yourself, enjoying things and having energy again.

Getting Help

For help with personal or workplace issues, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). These confidential services are available 24/7 to employees, their eligible household members and adult children under age 26, whether they live at home or not.



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Worklife Balance

Caregiving's critical statistics

Did you know that almost one third of all families in the United States are caring for an elderly parent or relative, adult child with disabilities or friend?¹ Family caregivers — who are considered “informal” caregivers because they are not paid — include spouses, adult children, and other relatives and friends.

Buried within these facts are some alarming statistics including:²

- **Sixty percent** of family caregivers hold full or part-time jobs in addition to performing caregiving responsibilities.
- **Twenty-three percent** of those caring for loved ones for five years or more report their health as fair or poor.
- **More than fifty percent** of all family caregivers experience stress and depression.

What do caregivers do?

Caregiving includes tasks that range from relatively simple to complex and time-consuming. Some aspects of caregiving are:

- Shopping and chores
- Telephone support
- Bill paying, banking and financial management
- Lifting, bathing, assisting in the bathroom and dressing
- Meal preparation
- Medication supervision

- Supervision of homecare services
- Doctors' appointments and healthcare decisions
- Oversight of hospital or nursing home care
- Emotional and social support

Caregiving goes beyond hard work

In addition to hard work, caregiving requires time and sacrifice. And no matter how loving the relationship between caregiver and the person who needs care, resentment and stress can easily build up over time.

This is particularly true if caregivers don't set realistic limits for themselves. In other words, they must be able to say “no” when necessary. This can be difficult, especially for those who tend to think they can “do it all.”

The very real risks of caregiving

The stress of caregiving puts caregivers at increased risk for burnout and health problems, such as:

- Depression
- Fatigue and other physical issues
- Chronic health conditions
- Conflict with other responsibilities, including relationships and work
- Increased alcohol or drug use

If you're a caregiver, remember:

You can't do everything on your own. If you're feeling burned out — or, even better, before you feel burned out — ask for help from relatives or friends. Reach out for additional support from private or community resources. Remember, you can't be a help to anyone else if you're not taking good care of yourself!

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The age of depression

Anyone, at any age can suffer from clinical depression. Depression is seen in children, teens, adults and elders — but can sometimes be hard to identify. The symptoms don't always look the same across age groups — or even genders.

Different people, different symptoms

Here are some of the more common signs for different age groups:¹

- **Children:** Children may show depression through sulking, misbehavior, crankiness, not wanting to go to school or being especially clingy. These behaviors, taken individually, could just be due to a bad day or a phase. Persistent patterns are part of the key in telling the difference. Talk with your pediatrician or other professional for help if you think your child may be depressed.
- **Teens:** Hormones, physical and emotional changes can make teens moody and hard to read even when they're feeling great! But depression is serious and teens' feelings are often acute. Symptoms include: sadness, anger, withdrawal from friends and family, loss of interest in activities and fatigue.

It's important to note that teens may act impulsively to cope with their pain. They may see suicide as an answer. If you're unsure whether a teen is depressed or just "being a teenager," err on the side of caution: seek professional help from a doctor or counselor.

▪ **Adults:**

- **Women:** Women often express depression with feelings and behaviors that signify sadness, helplessness and hopelessness.
- **Men:** Depressed men may act irritable, angry or discouraged rather than sad or blue. Their depression may be masked by drinking, drug abuse or working excessively.
- **Adults in general:** Some symptoms that may be observed in both men and women include: low mood, loss of appetite, low energy, mood swings, inability to concentrate and thoughts of suicide.

- **Older adults and elders:** Depression in older adults may be misdiagnosed as dementia since it may include confusion, disorientation and memory loss. Other symptoms may be: feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness, slowed speech and movement and thoughts of dying or suicide.

Elders may be particularly susceptible to depression because of the many losses they experience at this stage of life. Even dehydration and some medications may cause depressive symptoms in elders. Depression in elders is not normal and should never be accepted as simply part of getting old.

If you have a concern, take action

Depression plays no favorites — and we all need to be aware of feelings that are a call for help.

Getting Help

For help with personal or workplace issues, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). These confidential services are available 24/7 to employees, their eligible household members and adult children under age 26, whether they live at home or not.

¹Information in this article is taken from www.helpguide.org.



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Telling the Difference

Are you having a “sinking spell?”

There are many ways to describe feeling low. A sinking spell, waking up on the wrong side of the bed, feeling down in the dumps and having the blues are just a few of the expressions you may have heard. What is the difference between “a sinking spell” and a true depression?

- **Time.** You may feel blue for a few days and even a week or two. If the feeling lasts longer than a few weeks, you may be experiencing depression.
- **Coping.** Life may feel overwhelming but you believe things will change. When you are depressed, you no longer believe change is possible.
- **Enjoyment.** When you feel low, you may want to be alone for a while and not do some of your usual activities. Over time, you re-engage. Depression takes all enjoyment off the table. Things that once were enjoyable now seem a burden.

- **Guilt.** You may do something wrong and know how to make amends. When depressed, you feel responsible for things that you had nothing to do with.

When you are having a sinking spell, take some time to take care of yourself. You may want to lay low, pamper yourself or do whatever feels comforting. However, if you think you may be depressed, it is important to contact your medical doctor, etc. Effective help is available.

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All EAP calls are confidential, except as required by law (i.e., when a person's emotional condition is a threat to himself/herself or others, or there is suspected abuse of a minor child, and in some areas, spousal or elder abuse).

Information is believed to be accurate as of the production date; however, it is subject to change.

