

## DEALING WITH DEPRESSION

### Dealing with Depression

#### Find the Cause

- ✓ Depression can be triggered by a chemical imbalance in the brain, emotional problems, or a specific life crisis such as the loss of a loved one.
- ✓ A doctor, therapist or counselor can help you find the cause of the depression and guide you through options for feeling better. A combination of therapy and medications may help.



#### Talk to a Professional

- ✓ If you have felt sad or down for more than two weeks, consult with a doctor or therapist.
- ✓ Be sure your doctor checks for other illnesses and evaluates any medications you are taking that may cause depression-like symptoms.
- ✓ If your doctor is not familiar with treating depression, look for one who is. This is a specialized area.

#### Take Care of Yourself

- ✓ Healing from depression takes time. Taking care of yourself can speed up the process.
- ✓ Talk about your feelings with your friends, family or a therapist.
- ✓ Eat three meals a day. Ask friends to have meals with you.
- ✓ Make sure you get plenty of sleep.
- ✓ Try to look your best. You will feel better about yourself.
- ✓ Stay away from alcohol and other drugs. They can make depression worse.
- ✓ Remember, try for progress, not perfection. None of us takes perfect care of ourselves.

#### Stay Active

- ✓ Try to do the things you enjoyed before the depression set in. It is harder to feel bad when you are active.
- ✓ Exercise. Walk, dance or play a sport. Even a little exercise can help lift your mood.
- ✓ Talk, laugh, joke and play. Good feelings often follow good times.
- ✓ Volunteer, join a club or take a class.



#### Focus On the Positive

- ✓ Look for good things in life. For example, a nice sunset or a meal with friends can be a bright spot in your day. Focusing on good things can help you feel hopeful.
- ✓ Hopefulness can lead to healing.



#### Get Help

- ✓ If you are using alcohol or other drugs to cope with depression, get help from a doctor, therapist or other professional.
- ✓ If you are thinking about suicide, or if you are afraid you will hurt yourself or someone else, get help now. Contact your doctor or therapist, or call a crisis intervention hotline.

#### Give It Time

- ✓ As with most illness, healing takes time.
- ✓ Be patient with yourself. Most people do not overcome depression quickly.

### What Is Depression?

Depression is more than feeling sad. Like heart disease or diabetes, depression is a serious medical illness. It affects your thoughts, feelings, actions and health. But as with most other illnesses, depression can be treated.

#### Who Gets Depressed?

Anyone can become depressed. Depression is caused by many things including stress, medical illness, prescribed medications, alcohol or other drug use, family history, genetics, and psychiatric disorders.

#### What Can You Do?

Depression may not go away by itself. Without treatment, it can last for months or years. You need to take action to feel better. For people who are depressed, the hardest thing to do is to reach out for help, but it is also the first step toward getting better.

