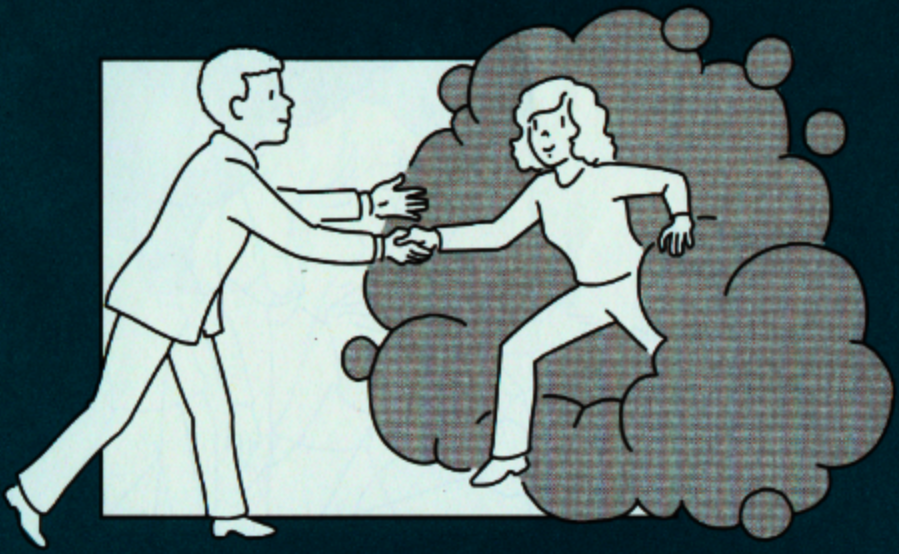
ABOUT GETTING HELP FOR DEPRESSION



DEPRESSION* -- IT'S MORE THAN JUST "THE BLUES"

Everyone feels down in the dumps now and then. But with depression, feelings of unhappiness are usually severe and long-lasting.

DEPRESSION IS AN ILLNESS
that often occurs with chemical imbalances in the brain. Unlike most other illnesses, depression mainly affects a person's mood, thoughts and actions.

DEPRESSION CAN AFFECT ANYONE,
including children and adults, men and women, wealthy and poor. Even people who are happy and successful can become depressed.

*In this booklet, the term "depression" will be used to refer to major depression and several related disorders.

Fortunately, today there is hope for people with depression!

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by Channing L. Bete Co., Inc., 200 State Rd., South Deerfield, MA 01373
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2000 Edition

DEPRESSION IS TREATABLE!

Treatment programs can:

RELIEVE SYMPTOMS
In most cases, medication and/or therapy programs can treat depression successfully.

PREVENT THE RETURN OF SYMPTOMS
Proper treatment helps keep depression from coming back, allowing healthy, happy living.

PRESERVE RELATIONSHIPS
Through treatment, people may become aware of factors contributing to their depression. This can open the way for better relationships with loved ones.

Learn more...

This booklet is not a substitute for an informed discussion between a patient and his or her health-care provider of the procedures or medications described in this booklet.

SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

may include some or all of the following:

FEELING LOW AND A LOSS OF MOTIVATION

People with depression may feel

- deep sadness or despair (often with crying for little or no reason)
- a sense of emptiness
- anxiety or restlessness
- an inability to enjoy usual activities, such as work, hobbies or sex.

TROUBLED THINKING PATTERNS

Depression can affect memory, concentration and the way people feel about themselves. For example, the illness may cause feelings of guilt, shame, worthlessness or helplessness. Many don't believe they can ever feel good again.

ABOUT SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

If you or someone you know thinks or talks about suicide, seek help immediately. Look in the Yellow Pages under "Mental Health" for hotline numbers, or call a local hospital emergency room.

STRAINED RELATIONSHIPS

Depression, like many other serious illnesses, can affect all kinds of relationships. People with depression often:

- show little or no responsiveness to others
- lack patience or understanding
- are unable to work
- withdraw from others altogether.

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

Depression can produce physical symptoms, such as:

- trouble sleeping, or sleeping too much
- unexplained headaches, backaches or stomachaches
- eating too much or too little
- too much -- or too little -- energy
- decreased sex drive
- slowed speech.

IS IT "THE BLUES" OR DEPRESSION?

Most people have some of these symptoms from time to time. But if symptoms last for more than two weeks, they may be a sign of depression.

THE COMMON FORMS OF DEPRESSION

include:

MAJOR DEPRESSION

This diagnosis is made if:

- mood and motivation are low for at least 2 weeks
- at least 4 other symptoms are present during the same period.

Left untreated, major depression may last months, even years. It may also recur.

DYSTHYMIA

People with this illness experience a chronic state of mild depression -- they feel "down" much of the time. They may function fairly well on a daily basis, but over time their work and relationships suffer. Fortunately, dysthymia can be successfully treated.

BIPOLAR DISORDER

Also known as manic depression, this disorder includes periods of depression and periods of "mania." Symptoms of mania include:

- extremely high, or "good" mood
- inflated opinion of oneself
- decreased need for sleep
- frantic or reckless thoughts, speech or actions (uncontrolled spending, sexual activity, etc.).

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER (SAD)

This is depression that may result from changes in the season. Most cases begin in the fall and winter.

FIGHT BACK AGAINST DEPRESSION!

If you or someone you know needs help, contact:

YOUR HEALTH-CARE PROVIDER

He or she can diagnose depression and ask questions to find out if depression is related to:

- physical causes
- alcohol or other drugs.

MENTAL HEALTH SPECIALISTS

Many offer specialized care for depression. Their help is available through:

- community mental health centers
- state and local health departments
- employee assistance programs (EAPs)
- hospitals and clinics
- private practices.

FOR RESOURCES IN YOUR AREA,

look in the front of your phone book or in the Yellow Pages under "Mental Health."

Many depressed people feel ashamed of their condition -- and of getting treatment. But depression is an illness, and treatment can help!

TREATING -- AND RELIEVING -- DEPRESSION

Depression can be successfully treated through the use of:

MEDICATION

A variety of medications can help relieve depression's symptoms and restore a person to normal functioning. These medications are not habit-forming, but their use needs to be monitored for maximum effectiveness.

ANTIDEPRESSANTS THAT HAVE BEEN AROUND FOR SOME TIME

include:

- tricyclics
- monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs)
- lithium (typically used in manic depressive illness).

THE NEWEST ANTIDEPRESSANTS

are:

- serotonin re-uptake inhibitors (SRIs)
- bupropion.

These 2 classes of antidepressants usually cause fewer side effects than the older medications.

It's important to be patient. In many cases, it takes a few weeks to identify the type and dosage of medication that works best.

PSYCHOTHERAPY

A highly trained expert helps people explore the contributing factors and effects of their depression. Common methods include:

- INTERPERSONAL THERAPY, which focuses on how a person's relationships may contribute to and be affected by depression. It seeks to explore and improve the person's relationships.
- COGNITIVE/BEHAVIORAL THERAPY, which helps the person examine troubled thoughts and actions. The goal is to help change the way the person thinks about and interacts with the world.

THERAPY SETTINGS MAY VARY

For example, people benefit from:

- INDIVIDUAL THERAPY -- one-on-one talks with a therapist
- MARRIAGE OR FAMILY THERAPY -- the person with depression and his or her loved ones participate
- GROUP THERAPY -- one or more facilitators help a group of people improve their mental health and the quality of their relationships
- SELF-HELP GROUPS -- people meet to discuss common issues.

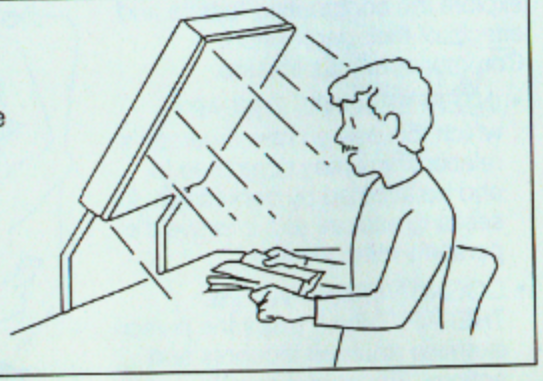
Medication and psychotherapy are often used in combination.

IN SPECIAL CASES,

treatment for depression may include:

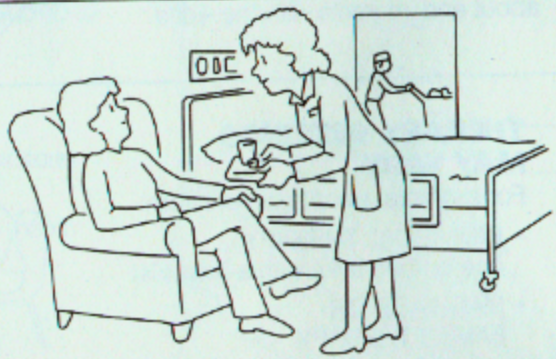
LIGHT THERAPY

Treatment for seasonal affective disorder may include exposure to a special light that simulates daylight.

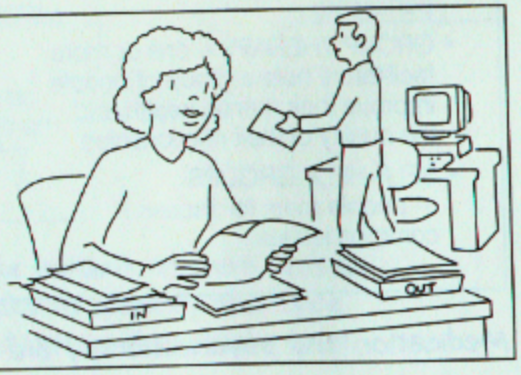


HOSPITALIZATION

If a depressed person's health or safety is in danger, a hospital stay may be necessary.



But in most cases, depression can be effectively treated on an outpatient basis. The patient can continue with his or her normal daily routine.



MEET THE MENTAL HEALTH SPECIALISTS WHO TREAT DEPRESSION

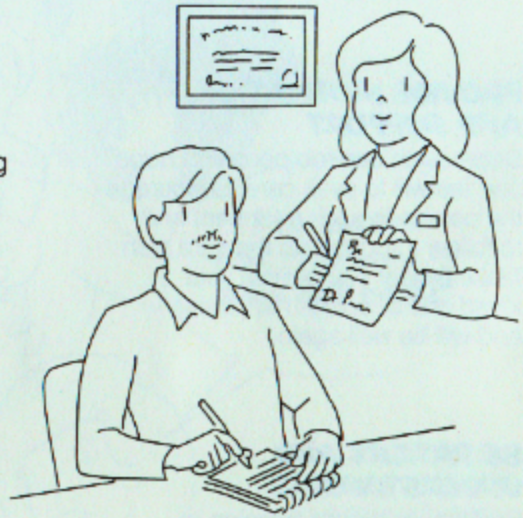
They include:

PSYCHIATRISTS

-- medical doctors specially trained in diagnosing and treating emotional and psychological problems through the use of medications and psychotherapy

PSYCHOLOGISTS

-- highly trained professionals who may specialize in diagnosing emotional and psychological problems, and in psychotherapy



SOCIAL WORKERS

-- specialists who may provide psychotherapy, referrals or other services

PSYCHIATRIC NURSES

-- registered nurses with advanced training in mental health who provide psychotherapy, education, medication monitoring, etc.

PSYCHOTHERAPISTS

-- providers of psychotherapy who often have specialized training.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS CAN HELP

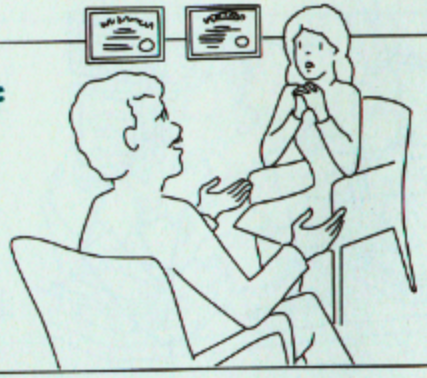
If you're a family member or friend of someone with depression, you can:

PROVIDE MOTIVATION AND SUPPORT

Depression can rob people of hope and the will to seek care. Encourage the person to seek treatment and to follow through with the care plan. Make it clear you believe your loved one deserves happiness and will be well again.

BE PATIENT AND UNDERSTANDING

Remember that depression is an illness, and that treatment can help. Be patient while the treatment plan is worked out. Make sure your loved one knows you'll be there. A little love and understanding go a long way!



BE KIND TO YOURSELF

A loved one's depression is hard on family members, too. Talking with a trained professional may be very helpful.

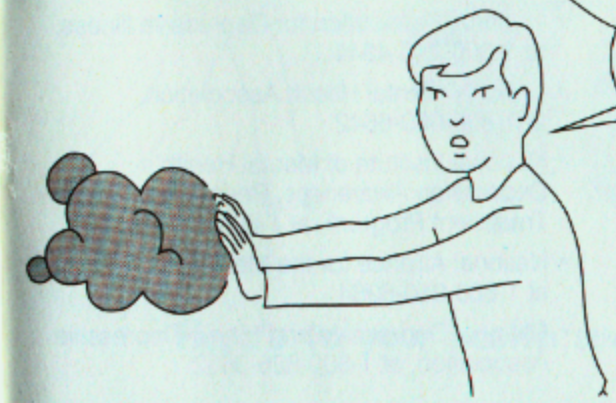
SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

In addition to chemical imbalances in the brain, many different factors may play a role when a person becomes depressed:

- a family history of depression
- stress (for example, from a major personal loss or physical trauma)
- personality or way of thinking about the world
- abuse of alcohol or other drugs.

Many women experience depression after having babies.

There are forms of depression that last for years and years. Even if you've learned to live with these bad feelings, treatment can help you feel better.



Early treatment can help reduce the likelihood of a return. However, left untreated, depression may linger -- or occur again and again.

MORE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Why can't a person with depression just "snap out of it"?

Depression destroys a person's self-esteem and motivation, making it difficult or impossible for the person to act. Avoid blaming the person for his or her condition. Remember, depression is not a weakness -- it's an illness.

How long will treatment take?

It varies from a few months to a year or more. It's important to follow through with all prescribed treatments, even if some relief appears before treatment ends.

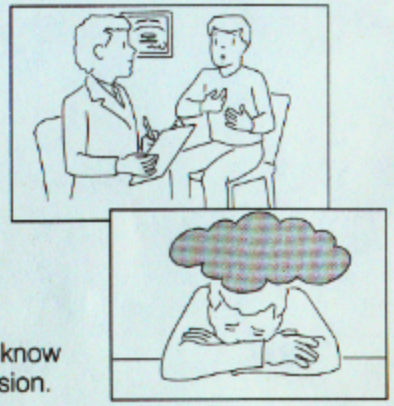
Where can I get more information about depression?

In addition to the resources listed on page 7, contact the:

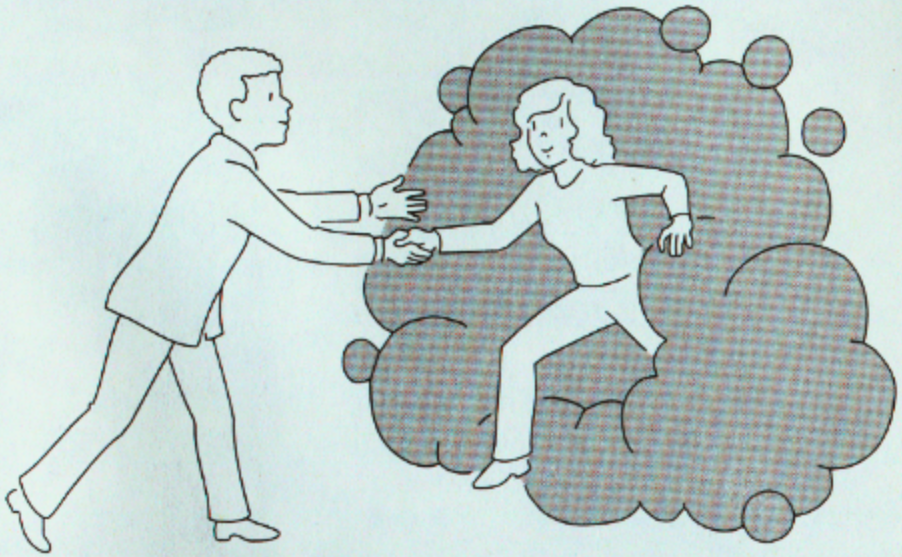
- National Foundation for Depressive Illness, at 1-800-248-4344
- National Mental Health Association, at 1-800-969-6642
- National Institute of Mental Health's Depression Awareness, Recognition, and Treatment Program, at 1-800-421-4211
- National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, at 1-800-950-6264
- National Depressive and Manic-Depressive Association, at 1-800-826-3632.

So --

DON'T LET DEPRESSION KEEP YOU DOWN!



- ✔ **REMEMBER,** depression is a real illness that can be treated.
- ✔ **RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS** of depression.
- ✔ **GET HELP** if you or someone you know shows signs of depression.



Here's to your health and happiness!