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Healthy Ways to Deal with
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Depression

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-Depression is more than having “the blues” or a couple of low days.

-Over 10 million Americans each year suffer from clinical depression.

What is depression? The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* defines depression as 5 or more of the following symptoms during a two week period (at least one of the symptoms must be either “depressed mood” or “loss of interest or pleasure”).

1. Depressed mood, most of the day, nearly every day.
2. Diminished interest or pleasure in all, or almost all, activities
3. Significant weight gain or loss, or decrease in appetite.
4. Sleep: not able to fall asleep or sleep through the night; sleeping too much
5. Restlessness
6. Fatigue or loss of energy
7. Feeling excessive worthlessness, or guilt
8. Problems with memory, concentration making decisions
9. Thinking about death or suicide (men suffering from depression tend to be angry and abuse alcohol or drugs)

What Helps?

-Research shows that 80 % of people suffering from depression can achieve significant relief. Many people experience relief from depression by a combination of counseling and healthy lifestyle change.

1. Maintain a regular routine; control the pace of your life (slow down, choose priorities, decrease commitments).

2. Minimize alcohol, caffeine and sugar.

3. Begin to exercise several days a week (walk, bike, swim; see your doctor for a check-up first).

4. Develop social support (friends, family or support group).

5. Change your thinking (most depressed people have strong negative and pessimistic thought patterns; develop optimism).

6. Develop your “spiritual side”; develop a sense of purpose, forgive yourself and others, practice meditation.

7. Counseling can help people identify and change negative, depressing life patterns: negative, pessimistic, guilt-ridden thought patterns; self-destructive behaviors; relationship problems.

8. Postpone making important life decisions when you are depressed.

9. Remember that people rarely get over depression in a day or a week. Be patient; work your way out of depression a day at a time.

10. If you have a significant personal or family history of depression, see a psychiatrist for an evaluation for medication. Be very careful about using herbal remedies to treat depression.